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VOYAGE

ROUND

THE COASTS OF SCOTLAND

AND THE ISLES.

86125

BY

JAMES WILSON, F.R.S.E., M.W.S., &c.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK, NORTH BRIDGE.

MDCCCXLII.

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APPROACH TO THE EAST BAY OF ST KILDA

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COASTING VOYAGE

ROUND

SCOTLAND.

CHAPTER I.

ST. KILDA.

We were becalmed for a portion of the night, and for some time both before and after sunrise the wind was so light that we made but little progress through a rolling sea. Yet by an early hour of the 2d August we came within sight of St. Kilda, distinguished from afar partly by the great mass of cloudy vapour which rested above and around it, partly by the actual appearance from time to time of its mountain summits, and those of the smaller rocky isles in its vicinity. As we neared the "amazing frown" of the main-

island, we got into smoother water, and were soon enabled to enjoy the wonders of the scene by which we were surrounded.*

It often happens that we form very inadequate notions of places before seeing them, even from sufficiently accurate descriptions,—so it need scarcely be wondered at that St. Kilda both greatly differed from, and far transcended our previous expectations. It is usually described as an entirely rocky rugged isle, its total circumference being formed by wall-like cliffs commonly called *mural* precipices. Steep and bold enough it is assuredly, whether for man or beast, but still neither our first nor abiding impression accorded with the accounts contained in books, especially so, far as the alleged almost total deficiency of landing places is concerned,—a most important point to all intending tourists. So far from the approach to any proper landing station being difficult, we soon found ourselves in a beautiful, capa-

* We have already given expression to some of our sentiments regarding St. Kilda, its people, and their pastor, in a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and published in the *Appendix to Report* of that Society's proceedings for 1841.

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St KILDA

cious, almost land-locked bay, into which we glided serenely and securely, and where the gentle summer waves showed scarcely a silver streak as they rippled upon the shelving rocks or pebbly margin of the inner shore. As besides St. Kilda and its immediate adherents, the group is composed of several great detached rocks, or smaller islands, the whole combined form a really magnificent mountain range, as seen from the sea, and assume a vast variety of shape and aspect in relation to each other, as the vessel from which they are beheld turns round the various points, and passes through the intermediate narrow seas by which they are surrounded.*

On a near approach to the principal island, the first and most conspicuous object which presents

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* We are indebted for the accompanying plan or map of St. Kilda to the kindness of Sir George Stewart Mackenzie of Coul, Bart., who paid a visit to the island early in the present century. He regards it rather as approximately than absolutely correct; but it will certainly suffice to show the general bearings, and the relative position of the various points referred to in the text. Sir George measured a short base on the Mulloch-More, and took angles from its extremities of all the principal points in sight, filling up the remainder by the eye.

itself is a long rugged promontory, called the Dun. This is in fact an island, being separated from St. Kilda by a narrow strait, nearly dry at low water, though its general aspect and actual character are those of a sheltering horn of the adjoining bay. It forms the left-hand barrier of this bay as you sail inwards toward the village, and from either side exhibits an extraordinary and striking appearance, from the irregular and almost fantastic form of its upper outline, which seems to present congregated groups of gigantic faces and fantastic forms. This peculiar effect is no doubt owing to portions of the rocky mass having decayed or been worn away by the moist and wintry winds, while other harder and more enduring portions have withstood their power. How beautiful and varied in effect are the ongoings of nature!

> "The very dead creation from her touch,
> Assumes a mimic life."

Dun signifies a fortified place, and is of common occurrence as a name on the mainland of Scotland, but here we could discover no trace of fortification, except that towards the extremity the remains of a rude wall seemed to cross it, as if to prevent any one who had landed from the sea,

being suddenly attacked or incommoded by others from the main-island. It was, however, difficult to distinguish this transverse remnant from the surrounding dilapidation, for the whole crust of the promontory, besides the more fantastical features already mentioned, combines also the semblance of a range of overthrown and ancient battlements,—" majestic though in ruins." It is also perforated in one place by a magnificent archway, through which the sea and sky combine to form a sparkling liquid lustre, contrasting finely with the dark though lofty rocks. By the time we approached this promontory an expected feature of the island became apparent in thousands of puffins (*Mormon fratercula*) flying overhead, and almost as many of the more gull-like fulmars (*Procellaria glacialis*) skimming the sea around us, and often approaching within a couple of yards of the vessel. All the stony ridges of the Dun were also covered by innumerable puffins, which lay their single egg in deep and subterranean crevices among the stones and splintered rocks, though not along the more precipitous edges. It is a fat little bird, the upper portions of the plumage and a ring around the neck black, the sides of the head and all the

under parts white. The form of the bill, from which it derives its name of *coulter-neb* is deep, compressed, ridged, with sharp edges, the colours leaden blue and scarlet. The legs and feet are orange.

On the right hand side as you enter the bay, the eye is met by a bold, steep, but not altogether precipitous mountain of St. Kilda proper. There is a fine dark cavern, scooped from a portion of its base, into which the quiet waters gently rose and fell; and then it ascends to a great height, with a certain sprinkling of scanty herbage, though on the whole with rather a grey and barren aspect. But it is the next or more inward feature of the bay that differs so greatly from what we had expected. A fine expansive semicircular shore presents itself, not hemmed in by dark and desolate rocks, but sloping gently upwards to the village, which stretches rather along its right hand portion, and consists of about thirty round roofed houses, with various enclosures,—the whole encompassed by a stone fence containing about forty acres of arable land. This comparatively sloping ground continues to extend to the leftwards of the village, and beyond the cultivated range, almost

till it meets the annectant base of the Dun; but immediately beyond and above it the mountain range rises more steeply, but still by no means precipitously, and though certainly not so green as the pastures of Peebles-shire, yet the prevailing verdure, the gradual uprising of the land, the absence of trees, and even a certain smoothness and uniformity of aspect and of outline in the hills which formed the immediate background, reminded both the Secretary and myself very strongly of that southern county. Indeed, we could have believed as we approached the landing-place in the row-boat, and looked around on the quiet waters, and the green and simple hills, that we were actually coasting along the far inland shores of "Still Mary's Loch," although in place of the double image of the floating and inverted swans, the living air was filled with the flapping wings of rock-haunting sea-fowl. This then was the first feature which entirely disagreed with our preconceived impressions of St. Kilda,—that instead of being approached by a lowering ledge of boat-repelling cliffs, the entrance is by a placid semicircular bay,—reminding the spectator rather of the pastoral uplands of Peeblesshire, than of a

rocky sea-girt isle. There was, however, one peculiar character in the scene before us. The ridges of the hills and many of the steeper and more exposed portions of their sides, were covered by numerous small cairn-like conical structures of dry stone, from eight to ten feet high. These we afterwards found were for the purpose of drying and preserving their hay and fuel, which latter commodity consists merely of some poor fibrous superficial turf, with little or no peaty substance in it. Let Lewis rejoice in her hags, darker and deeper than Macbeth's weird sisters. But the effect of the singular buildings just alluded to, is to bestow upon this portion of the main-island, the character of being strangely and uncouthly fortified.

Soon after entering the bay we left the Cutter, and as we neared the shore in the row-boat, we could see a few of the male natives looking at us from over a stone enclosure between the village and the sea, and as we approached still more closely they descended to a shelving ledge of the more rocky portion of the shore, thus intimating to us the proper landing-place, instead of a smoother pebbly margin to which we had been making. As our prow touched the rock, they

seized upon the boat, hitched her up a bit, held her from heeling over, and in another moment we stood on Terra-Kilda. Smooth as the waters were, there was of course no saying what an hour might bring forth, and as our Gaelic sailors and the natives perfectly understood each other, we followed the advice of the latter, and joining together in the work, we hoisted the boat high and dry upon the beach.

The small group of St. Kildeans, of whom not many showed themselves at this time, seemed cheered by our arrival. A considerable interchange of "Gaelic and the English tongue" took place between us, they understanding little more of what we said, than we did what they. The native assemblage consisted chiefly of one active little old man, and a few young lads. In the course of another minute, however, as we were making our way from the rougher ground, in the direction of a pathway leading to a stile or break in the stone fence, we descried a person of the better class making his way towards us. He gave us the right hand of fellowship with great cordiality, and we need scarcely say that this was the Rev. Neil Mackenzie, the minister of St. Kilda, a

sincere, simple, kind-hearted, pious man, as we firmly believe from the impression which our subsequent intercourse with him produced upon us all. We then walked with him upwards towards the village.

The first house we came to was a pretty large slated one, close upon the right-hand shore. It is used only as a *store*, for containing the feathers of the sea-fowl, the staple export of the island, and the article with which they pay their rent *in kind*, as they have seldom a stiver of money among them. A little onwards and upwards, we came to another very respectable-looking slated house, of two storeys, with a little porch, and a longer and larger, but not much higher building (also slated) behind it, and separated only by a narrow back court. These were the minister's manse and the kirk. We should have mentioned that just as we entered the gap or gateway of the stone enclosure, we discovered a group of four or five fine rosy cheeked children, with clean hands and well-washed faces, tidy dark green tartan frocks or trowsers (according to their kind), and little bare feet, the whole under the superintendence of a by no means tidy, but good enough looking, St.

Kilda lass. These were the Minister's bairns (Heaven preserve and feed them!) and we all joined company, and proceeded together to the manse. Entering the porch and passage we turned to the right, and took our seats in a neat enough room, carpeted, and with chairs and tables, but with some appearance of damp upon the walls, which, on tapping with our knuckles, we found had not been lathed. Mrs. Mackenzie immediately made her appearance, a fresh-complexioned pleasant-looking person. She produced her bottles from the press, and we took a single sip, just sufficient to avoid offending the usages of Highland hospitality. *Usage*, however, is a very inappropriate word in the present case, for the said bottles had probably not been produced for many a month before.

We next proceeded by the back entrance of the house across to the kirk, which in its interior presents a fully more respectable appearance than we have seen in several Highland buildings on the mainland devoted to the same sacred purpose. The interior accommodations consist of a small unpainted pulpit, a double row of forms in the area of the building, and a passage way between

the door and pulpit, through between the ends of the forms. Near the pulpit there was a piece of railing, with a yard or two of desk-work, like that in the seats of our ordinary city churches. This portion seemed to be used as a writing school, and a copy-book which caught our eye, had the words ST. KILDA in large hand, repeated over and over again, very legibly, upon its ample page. The good Minister is teacher and writing-master, (literally prime minister) as well as priest, and seems to leave nothing untried to ameliorate the condition of his flock, whether by enlightening their spiritual darkness, improving their worldly fortunes, or, as Dr. Johnson would have said, raising them in the scale of thinking beings. For this he has already met with, at least, the earthly portion of his reward, in their confiding and unbounded affection: and soon another and far brighter day may come, when, removed from the ceaseless cares and hardships of his present forlorn estate, he will hear, from the benign voice of his blessed Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

We then proceeded onwards to the so called village, by a narrow road or footpath. The

houses, or at least the front ones, form a pretty regular line, though some are placed farther back or behind the others, so, as in these parts, to make the line double. They run rather inwards and upwards than along the Bay, and have the appearance of being detached from each other, though sometimes two small dwellings join together. As *stones* are plenty in the island, the walls are of great thickness, or rather each wall is double, there being built, first of all, a couple of very strong *dykes* within a foot or two of each other, and then the intermediate space is crammed with earth, which fills up all the interstices, and produces a comfortable dwelling. The door-way is very low, and the great thickness of these double walls produces a space as you enter, which may be called a passage. There are generally two rooms together, each apartment being covered by a separate roof, although there are smaller single tenements for widow women and old maids.

The furniture, as may be supposed, is scanty enough, though much improved, we understand, of late years, by the exertions of Dr. Macleod and other friends of the Highlanders in general. Each house has one or more bedsteads, with a

small supply of blankets, a little dresser, a seat or two with wooden legs, and a few kitchen articles; and almost every dwelling has also a small four-paned window, which, however, admits but an inefficient light, owing to the great thickness of the walls. None that we noticed had a chimney, the smoke finding its devious way as it best can from the floor to a hole in the roof. This is trying to the eyes of strangers. We rested for a time in one of the houses, inhabited by a widow and her daughter, and found that the former had been with her dog across the hill that morning to collect her food, which at certain seasons is really scattered before them like manna in the wilderness. They have "flesh rained upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea." Their chief sustenance at this time consisted of the small sea-fowl before mentioned under the name of *puffin*. The widow had snared about a score, and having already eaten *a few* for breakfast, was now employed in boiling a corresponding number for dinner. We saw their little fat bodies turning round and round in the pot, and would have tasted one as soon as it was ready, had we not happened at the time to be less carnivorously

inclined than usual, in consequence of the tossing of the previous night. These birds are caught by stretching a piece of cord along the stony places where they chiefly congregate. To this cord are fastened, at intervals of a few inches, numerous hair nooses, and from time to time, when the countless puffins are paddling upon the surface, in go their little web feet, they get noosed round the ancle, and no sooner begin to flap and flutter than down rushes a ruthless widow woman and twists their necks. Her dog had acted a useful part, not only in driving more distant or otherwise inaccessible birds from their roosting places towards the nooses, but by catching them dexterously in its mouth.

We were amused by the good minister's views and expressions regarding the changes of the season in this "lonely isle," though they were in strict accordance with, and in truth the natural results of his peculiar position. Instead of talking of flowers and plants, and the "leafy umbrage" of the forest, as signs of summer, and of dry and desolate trees as winter's emblems, he spoke of the *cheering influence* of the first arrival of solan geese in spring, and of the dull and gloomy aspect of

the rocks in winter, when they are left "with scarcely a single bird."

The dwelling-houses altogether may amount to upwards of thirty. They have circular or somewhat rounded roofs of thatch, well fastened down with ropes or stretches of the same material, and instead of the straw overhanging the walls, as is usual in the low countries, and affording an effectual purchase for the wind to lay hold of, the edge of the thatch springs from the inner side of the thick wall, and so the wind blowing up its outside, and there finding nothing else to act upon, instead of carrying off the roof as it would otherwise be apt to do, simply slips over this cupola kind of covering, and then sughs itself away into the clouds.

All along the fronts, or rather gable ends of the principal row of houses, there is a kind of rough causewayed road or footpath sufficient for at least two people to walk abreast, and almost all around every house there is a double or triple row of large stones which must form dry stepping places nearly at all seasons of the year. As every kind of manure, especially the ashes of their scanty supply of fuel, is of great importance, and

the latter article is injured by exposure to moisture, there are covered outhouses for such collections, while animal garbage, such as *viscera*, and heads and feet of birds, are thrown into a circular open pit, of which one is attached to (we should rather say dug in the vicinity of) each little group of houses. It was near these pits, as well as elsewhere, that we were struck by the familiar presence of several grey crows (*Corvus cornix*), which sat so close upon the house tops as we were passing, that none of us doubted they were pets. On mentioning this to the Minister, we thought at first that he agreed they were, but we soon found he meant and said that they were *pests*, for they tear off the thatch in search either of grain or insects, and are extremely injurious before the setting in of winter, in loosening these otherwise firm and convenient roofs. Mr. Mackenzie said, "I am a bad marksman, but I think with powder I could frighten them." The Secretary gave him both powder and shot before our departure, and we doubt not that by this time they have at all events heard by report of the Minister being thought a great gun by the St. Kildeans.

The population of the island at the time of our

visit, including the Minister, his wife, and family of seven children, amounted precisely to 105.*

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* We were surprised to find that although the census or enumeration of the inhabitants of the whole kingdom had been recently taken up, poor St. Kilda had not even been regarded as belonging to the British dominions. No one there had ever heard of the census, and no schedule had been sent to the minister from any quarter. We shall supply the deficiency by the following list of the inhabitants up to August 1841. We shall merely premise that, in addition to whatever slight knowledge a few of them may possess of certain handicrafts, the whole of the male sex who have attained to and have not passed the prime of life, are what we may call practical ornithologists, or cragsmen.

Name.	Number in Family.
Finlay Gillies,	6
Neil MacKinnon,	3
Angus MacDonald,	3
Finlay MacQueen,	5
John Gillies,	6
Malcolm MacDonald,	5
Finlay MacQueen,	6
Donald MacQueen,	3
John Gillies,	4
Anne MacQueen, a widow,	2
Malcolm MacDonald,	3
John MacDonald,	3
	49

Their numbers seem scarcely to have increased at all for many years, partly owing to a few young men having occasionally left the island, but still more in consequence of many children dying in very early infancy, frequently about the ninth

Name.	Number in Family.
Brought forward,	49
Mary Morrison, a widow,	2
Catherine Ferguson, old maid of 83,	1
Mary MacDonald and her natural daughter,	2
Roderick Gillies,	4
John Ferguson,	4
Donald Macrimmon,	2
Neil Ferguson,	4
Finlay Gillies,	5
John MacDonald,	4
Margaret MacLeod, a widow,	2
Lachlan MacKinnon,	5
Euphemia Macrimmon, an old maid, and her niece,	2
Mary MacKinnon, a widow,	1
Roderick MacDonald,	6
Finlay Ferguson,	2
Finlay MacLeod, aged 83,	1
	96
Mr. Mackenzie and family,	9
Total Population of St. Kilda,	105

day, of croop, or some corresponding *affection*, as the worst maladies are endearingly termed by our medical advisers. Mr. Mackenzie confirmed the account which we had previously read and disbelieved, of the natives being almost always attacked by influenza after the arrival of a boat from the Long Island, the eastern range with which they have necessarily the most frequent intercourse. He could not account for it otherwise than by supposing that those in the boat had themselves previously caught cold by exposure in a small open vessel, and that such cold was of an infectious nature to those among whom they landed. The fact, however, he regarded as undoubted; and he stated that a native had died of this influenza last year, having been taken ill with several others immediately after the arrival of a boat from Harris. Some were just recovering while we were there, who had been attacked by it at an earlier period of the summer, soon after their only visit from Harris during the current season. The effect does not seem to be produced by arrivals from other quarters, or except by open boats, so we were under no apprehension of causing harm.

Besides the houses of the villagers, there are

numerous small circular stone buildings resembling cairns, scattered all over the sides and summits of the hills above. These are the places in which they store their turf or fuel, chiefly that it may dry the sooner under cover, and by means of a current of air, produced by two openings in each building, one at either end. Some are built in the form of lengthened galleries, open at each extremity. We fear these poor people are very badly off in respect to that essential article of domestic comfort; and the Minister said, he always rejoiced when the long and lightsome days arrived, as it was so often dark and cheerless in winter from the want or scarcity of fire. We have already mentioned that they have here no mosses or peat hags, so abundant in almost all other Highland districts, and are therefore obliged just to pare off the surface from the hill pastures. It thus may some day come to be a fearful struggle between cold and famine, when the

"Hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

And even now, we believe, that little more firing is used than just suffices for the cooking of their sometimes scanty meals. The day we called at the Manse, we have reason to believe that there

was no fire in the house, not even in the kitchen! How thankful should others be for the bright enjoyment of their cheerful household hearths.

The arable land within the larger enclosure, and fronting the village, is chiefly laid out in small rigs of barley, and is subdivided into about twenty portions, belonging to a corresponding number of families. There are besides about eight smaller families who are not so portioned. In ordinary years they are said to raise sufficient grain for their own consumption. The hill pastures are common, seven shillings being paid for each cow's grazing, and one shilling for each sheep, above ten, annually. The caschrom, or plough-spade, was in common use on Mr. M'Kenzie's first arrival, but he has since contrived to render the use of the English spade almost universal, and the introduction of drains has nearly doubled the produce of the arable land. We saw one large open drain leading through the cultivated portion, which he induced them to cut through soil and rocky fragments by a bribe of a pound and a half of tobacco divided among them.

In smaller enclosures here and there are what by courtesy may be called gardens, in which

some cabbages and a few potatoes grow. The minister has tried both carrots and onions with some success. Turnips seem to thrive well for a time, but are speedily cut off by some kind of destructive insect, and peas and beans blossom, but produce no pods. Hotch-potch is therefore "a thing to dream of, but not to see." A little mustard was growing merrily near the manse, and most of the crops looked almost gay, from the prevalence of a showy yellow weed (*Calendula arvensis*) commonly called the corn marigold. Sea pinks were plentiful, both about the shore and village.

The Minister stated that, on the whole, the people were a very moral race, that many of them were under very serious religious impressions, and were becoming more so each succeeding year. There are about twenty communicants, and about twenty more who are under instruction and preparation with a view to the partaking of that sacred ordinance. Several of the older men among the natives are very fluent in prayer, and never fail to conduct a kind of public worship during the few occasions in which the minister is absent. The people are at these times assembled together,

with prayer and psalm singing, and a portion of the Bible, with a chapter of the Gaelic translation of Boston's Fourfold State, is read aloud. The singing of psalms and hymns is even a favourite spiritual recreation of the people, and is resorted to frequently and voluntarily in their own houses, independent of the more formal meetings which may be occasionally called for the express purpose. These spiritual songs may even be said to be of ordinary use almost as the *popular poetry* of the day, and have in a great measure superseded all ordinary vocal music of a worldly character. The Irish melodies are unknown. Dancing is also now regarded by them as a frivolous amusement, and has ceased to be practised even during their more joyous festivals, such as marriage or baptism.

The St. Kilda community may in many respects be regarded as a small republic, in which the individual members share most of their worldly goods in common, and, with the exception of the minister, no one seems to differ from his neighbours in rank, fortune, or condition. Indeed, a peculiar jealousy is alleged to exist on this head, no man being encouraged to go in advance of those about him in any thing, which of course must be

a drawback on improvement. However, many kind and Christian features are engrafted on the system, such as widows and orphans, or others unable to maintain themselves, being supported by the community in equal proportions. They thus strictly obey what has been called the eleventh commandment:—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." They are frequently very ill off during stormy weather, or those periods of the year in which the rocks are deserted by their winged inhabitants. Their slight supply of oats and barley would scarcely suffice for the sustenance of life; and such is the injurious effect of the spray in winter, even on their hardiest vegetation, that savoys and German (or curly) greens, which with us are improved by the winter's cold, almost invariably perish soon after the close of autumn. This, however, is not owing to the rigour of the climate, but to the saltness of the spray which the boisterous winds of winter carry up from the turmoil of the raging shores, and spread upon the surrounding vegetation. This the minister has endeavoured to prevent by having recently raised a stone-dyke of ten feet high around a small enclosure in which his

cabbages lie ensconced. In other respects, in truth, the climate is extremely mild,—the ice which is formed even during the coldest night in winter being scarcely thicker than a penny, and usually melting away, if the sun is at all visible, in the course of the ensuing day.

The people pay their rent (about £60, as we were told) chiefly by means of feathers, which they collect from both the young and old birds, and each family is also bound to furnish about twenty-three pecks of barley every year. This, however, I believe, is made up by an additional supply of feathers. Of these the quantity which the *nation* must furnish is 240 stones, each family contributing what it can to the general stock, which is laid up for the proprietor, or rather his tenant, in the slated store-house near the shore. In their proceedings they thus literally realize a supposed poetical conversion :—

> "And though the rocky-crested summits frown,
> These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down."

We were certainly at first surprised that there should have been so few of the middle-aged and stouter class of men to witness if not to welcome our arrival. But this was soon accounted

for by the fact that about ten days previous, a principal portion of the male population had proceeded to the neighbouring island of Borrera, and a steep rock near it, to collect; and *the* boat (they have only one) had gone off with a crew that morning to bring these adventurers home. They arrived while we were still in the island,—nineteen stout men and lads, the crew included,—and we had an opportunity of inspecting their harvest. The large boat was half filled with huge bundles of feathers, and besides these there were a great number of smaller bundles of dark red rather repulsive-looking fleshy things, which we found to consist of the hind-legs and backs of birds, chiefly young solans. They also brought numerous long distended bags (the stomachs of old solan geese) filled with oil, which they extract nearly pure from the stomach of the fulmar, a species of sea-fowl almost peculiar to St. Kilda.* This article, as

* These stomach-bags are sometimes put to a more savoury use. Sir George Mackenzie has just informed us that when he visited St. Kilda some of his party discovered a cask of wine upon the shore. They marked its position accordingly, and on paying it a second visit found it empty. It had meanwhile been also discovered by the natives, who (in the absence of bottles) had tapped and drawn off its contents into the stomachs of solan

may easily be imagined, is one of essential service to the people throughout the darkness of their long-enduring winter. It is extracted from both the young and old birds, which however they must seize on suddenly and strangle, else as a defensive movement the desired (and pungent) oil is immediately squirted in the face and eyes of their opponent. And here we were able to correct a prevailing error on the subject in books of natural history. The fulmar has what are called tubular nostrils, that is, they are raised like little pipes on the surface of the upper mandible, and according to *books* are used for throwing out the oil in question. But according to the evidence of the minister, and other students of the *Biblia Naturæ*, who have watched the process a thousand times along these rock-bound shores, they eject it directly through the throat and open mouth. The flesh of the fulmar is also a favourite food with the St. Kildeans, who like it all the better on account of its oily nature. With it and other sea-fowl,

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geese, which Sir George afterwards found suspended from the cottage rafters. He adds that relationship was claimed with him on the part of an old woman of the name of Macdonald, on the score that her mother's aunt had suckled a sister of Sir George's grandmother.

they boil and also eat raw a quantity of *sourocks*, or large leaved sorrel,—a sad and watery substitute for the mealy potatoes of more genial climes. But happy is it for those who, like many a poor St. Kildean, know and remember, that "man does not live by bread alone."

Although most of these men were what we Southrons would call undersized, many of them were stout and active, and several of them handsome featured, with bright eyes, and an expression of great intelligence. One of them had even a noble countenance, and as he stood up in the boat, which partly concealed the shortness of his stature (he was a sort of John Kemble *rasé*), and with broad chest and brawny arms heaved on shore huge bundle after bundle of damp and weighty feathers, following each flight with keen observant eye, he presented a first-rate picture of activity and strength combined. The prevailing dress greatly resembled that of the fishermen of the Long Island,—small flat blue bonnets, coarse yellowish white woollen jerkins, and trowsers also of coarse woollen stuff, of a mixed colour, similar to that of heather stalks.

Although the village exhibits a grey and time-

worn aspect, from its simple form and cairn-like colour, yet all the houses have been rebuilt upon a better and more commodious, if not enlarged plan, within these last few years. Previous to this the people had lived in structures of immemorial age, the same in fact as those in which their ancestors had dwelt during the entire period of their authentic history. Their former buildings consisted of a low narrow entrance through the thick stone wall, leading to a first apartment, in which, at least during the winter season, were kept the cattle, and then to a second, in which the natives dwelt. These inner rooms, though small, were free from the incumbrance of beds, for the latter were placed in, or were rather formed by deep recesses of the walls, like low and horizontal open presses, into which they crept at night, their scanty bedding being placed (in imitation of the puffins) upon stones. There seems to have been only two of these dormitories in each habitation, however numerous the family may have been, and a peculiar and by no means praiseworthy practice prevailed, of the young people of different families being assembled in the evening, and all passing the night together in a separate

building, adjoining but not identical with their parents' dwelling. But this, with several other practices of the olden time, has been lately done away.

Another peculiar habit, connected with their slight agricultural resources, must have rendered these small inner apartments still more incommodious. Of course they had no windows, and light and air could find admittance only through the same opening in the roof through which the smoke ascended. But with a view to the collection of manure in spring, the ashes of every fire were daily spread upon the floor, moistened and trod upon, so as to form a compact substance, which increased so rapidly, that after a time the flooring was several feet higher than at the commencement of the season, so that at last not only was it impossible to stand upright, but the inhabitants were obliged to dive into their sleeping dens at night like rats or rabbits,—for the middle portion of the flooring was by this time far above the opening to the so-called beds. To admit of this nocturnal entrance, the floor, or at least its superficial ashy portion, was beat into a conical form, which we need scarcely say rendered the

interior of these dwellings entirely useless for all the ordinary purposes of locomotion, as the inhabitants were ere long unable to stand upright, and soon required to crawl upon their hands and knees. The clergyman said, that in administering spiritual consolation to the sick or the dying, he at first found this descending to their bed-sides with his own heels uppermost was "rather inconvenient, as he had never been previously accustomed to it," but that habit reconciled him to that and many things unknown on the mainland. When the due season arrived these floors were broken up, and carried out of doors, and after being mingled with the manure collected from the cattle in the *ante-room*, and with the remnants of birds and other offal from an odoriferous pit opposite the front door, were spread upon the ground to increase its scanty and precariously productive powers.

We may now mention the origin of the improved or modern system of house-building, the *St. Kilda renovata* of this lonely isle. Some years ago an accomplished and liberal English gentleman of fortune, Sir Thomas Dyke Ackland, visited St. Kilda in his yacht, and being much interested

by the natives, and distressed by an inspection of their incommodious, and as he thought unhealthy dwellings, he left a premium of twenty guineas with the minister, to be given to the first person or persons who should demolish their old house and erect a new one on a more proper and convenient plan. This was certainly a handsome donation on the part of the English baronet, though as small a sum as ever before sufficed to lay the foundations of a modern city. We formerly mentioned that a characteristic feature in the mental constitution or social polity of the St. Kildeans consisted in their tenacious adherence to uniformity,—no man being allowed, or at least encouraged, to outstrip his neighbours in any thing leading rather to his own advantage than the public weal. From this cause it was sometime before any one was bold enough to advance beyond the habits of his ancestors and contemporaries, although at last a spirit bolder than the rest made up his mind to proceed in accordance with the plan prescribed. Every obstacle, however, was thrown in his way by his more indolent or less aspiring neighbours, and it is probably one disadvantageous result of an otherwise amiable

and interesting system almost of community of goods, that it tends to check the exertions of individuals to raise themselves above their neighbours, as the active and intelligent are scarcely in any way better off than the lazy or less enlightened. However, at length the individual alluded to proceeded to the work of demolition and reconstruction, and was followed almost simultaneously by about half a dozen others. A general masonic movement then took place, after which the worthy clergyman, who may be regarded, under the Divine Master whom he serves so faithfully, as the presiding genius of the island, contrived to prevent undue haste, and that incompleteness of work which might result from hurried labour; and as it was now obvious that whoever might have had the merit of commencing, all were likely to come to a quick conclusion at one and the same time, it was arranged that the great prize should be shared in equal portions by the heads of houses in the whole community. Thus the ancient city of St. Kilda was razed to its foundations, and one of modern structure erected in its place.

Only a single roofless hut of the olden time remains, if not to "attest its ancient grandeur," at least to show the peculiar structure of the sleeping places in the stone walls, and other peculiarities already noticed.*

In speaking of the modern city of St. Kilda, it need not be supposed that the improvements produced were of a very striking or impressive character, or that any signal amelioration of the do-

* Our artist, of his own fancy, has introduced kilted figures to enliven the general aspect of the scene. There are, however, no kilts in St. Kilda.

mestic condition of the people was instantaneously effected. But Mr. Mackenzie endeavoured, while he could not essentially deviate from the old plan, to free it from its greatest vices. He expended the twenty guineas chiefly in small square four-paned windows, so that each dwelling is now pervaded by at least a portion of the light of day; and by means of some additional funds obtained elsewhere by the exertions of Christian-minded men, wooden dressers, seats, box-beds, with sundry articles of crockery, and other domestic implements, were added to their household gear. The floors were well levelled, the fire-places put at one end of the apartment, each man debarred that earth or rather hearth should "hold his ashes," and the receptacle for garbage, instead of occupying several square yards in front of every dwelling, was removed to a separate pit, dug at some little distance in the background. A covered out-house was built for the said ashes,—a valuable manure, which suffers from exposure to air and moisture. Their bedding has been improved, and a few supernumerary articles added to their stores. Mrs. MacLeod, the wife of the proprietor, visited the island some seasons back, and presented each of

the women with a comfortable woollen shawl. But still their worldly condition is both poor and precarious, and from the want of meal they have been worse off this year than during many preceding ones. We are not sure that even the minister's family had had a sufficiency of bread for several months. Their supply of salt was also exhausted.

The church-yard, or rather burying-ground, a place always invested with solemn interest, stands a little higher up than the prevailing line of houses, and presents a good view of the village bay, and the rocky promontory called the Dun.

It was unenclosed till Mr. Mackenzie induced the people to fence it round with stones, and place a few rude steps by which it might be rendered more easily accessible from below. It surrounds what may be called the debris rather than the ruins of the ancient chapel of St. Mary, nothing being visible but some scattered stony heaps, without form and void. The grassy mounds have each an uncarved memorial stone at either end, all unlettered save a small regularly cut but unassuming tablet erected by the minister in remembrance of deceased children. The indistinct though perceptible remnants of another ancient chapel, that of St. Brimmin, still exist on a grassy terrace immediately over that corner of the bay which approximates to the base of the Dun.

We afterwards paid a visit to the national kiln, in which the people of this "distant island of the sea" dry their corn. It consisted of two dark apartments, one within and of considerably higher level than the other, and a hole runs from a corner of the lower floor under that of the upper, in which a man sits to tend the fire. The grain is dried in the sheaf, and then threshed out on the lower floor.

Having performed our little tour in and around the village, and seeing that our society, however unworthy, was a cheerful novelty to the minister, and being also desirous to enjoy as much of his company as we could, the Secretary invited him to go with us on board the Cutter, to which he gladly assented. As it was our intention to take advantage of the very delightful weather with which we were at this time favoured, to make the entire circuit of the island, as well as visit its detached dependencies, we requested Mrs. Mackenzie not to look for her "goodman's" return that night, and she seemed gratified by any thing that was likely to contribute to his recreation. As she herself had seven "detached dependencies" of her own, and had therefore her hands full at home, we did not propose to her to accompany her husband. We got into our boat as easily as we had landed, and speedily found ourselves again on board the Princess Royal in the bay.

We may here note that, contrary to the accounts contained in books, there are two bays,—the one in which we then were, called East Bay, and another of smaller dimensions across the country, called West Bay. These at least till lately were

their usual designations; but they are now more generally known by other names, bestowed out of well-merited respect towards two excellent individuals, who had greatly benefited the island, both by many kindly exertions, and a recent ecclesiastical visitation,—Drs. Dickson and Macleod. The eastern or village entrance, is now called by the natives Dickson's Bay, while the opposite or western one, is named after Dr. Macleod. We think that the application of these designations may be taken as a fine illustration of the good spirit which pervades the people. They knew nothing of Lords of the Admiralty, or of great circumnavigators, or other "men of renown," but they knew that two kind-hearted pious individuals had come to their almost forgotten shores with "glad tidings," seeking to diffuse the blessings of the gospel, at their own personal inconvenience and discomfort; and they seek to mark their sense of that holy kindness by the names in question, which are at least as appropriate as Melbourne Mount, or Russell's Reach, or Point Palmerston.

It need scarcely be said that we gave the minister the best cheer we had it in our power to bestow. He ate heartily of several unaccustomed

articles, and with an undisguised and almost youthful relish which it was delightful to look upon. The curry-soup and pancakes were thought *surprising*,—the malt was swallowed, though deliberately,—the wine and liqueurs were almost entirely avoided. He said he had long led so abstemious a life from necessity (for the pride of the ascetic was far from him, and he knew the lawfulness of the moderate use of all the "creatures of God,") that he had now almost lost the remembrance of these more exciting beverages; and that as in such forgetfulness they were least missed, he had no desire for any partial renewal of enjoyments which might make him covet what he could never hope to obtain. When pressed after dinner to take another glass of wine, he said, "If you please, I would rather just speak a little more," meaning thereby to express his pleasure in conversing about many things which were of course as dead letters to those among whom he had sojourned for nearly twelve long years. Though probably not a person of finished education, he is yet well informed and intelligent, and assuredly possesses that without which knowledge is vain, the fear of God, "the beginning of wisdom." He

gave us a great deal of information regarding the temporal as well as spiritual condition of the people, their habits of life, and customary occupation, and described (what we ere long witnessed) their fearless mode of collecting the eggs and young of the various sea-fowl from the faces of the vast precipitous cliffs which overhang the sea.

We have already mentioned the 240 stone of feathers as a general contribution, and the 23 pecks of barley payable by each of the families (about a score in number) which have allotments of arable land,—the two combined forming the rent of the island, or at least its principal portion. For this they have their houses and plots of ground, the right of course of catching the birds, plucking and storing their feathers, and eating their eggs and flesh,—and the further privilege of grazing (each family) ten sheep upon the hill pastures, and the right of cutting or rather pairing turf. Two or three small horses still exist upon the island (originally imported to carry turf), but they are found to be of no use, and therefore no charge is made for their pasture, and we believe the people would willingly part with them to any person who would carry them away. So whoever

desires a cheap horse, we recommend him to proceed forthwith to St. Kilda.

There are in all about fifty cows upon the island, of small size, but yielding a delicious milk, which in the making of cheese is mingled with that of ewes. There are about 2000 sheep, including those of Borrera and Soa. The Soa sheep are chiefly of the Danish breed, with brown and black wool, and one or two more horns than the usual complement. But the great product of St. Kilda is feathers, collected as we have said by the general population, every working man doing what he can to fill the boat during each excursion to the rocks or neighbouring islands, until the requisite supply has been obtained and stored away. In this way old age and sickness are of no disadvantage to the individual beyond the physical sufferings which they may entail, for his house, grazing, and fuel privileges belong to him as a member of the community, and the feathers are collected by the able-bodied, who also distribute a due proportion of the general stock of solan goose flesh, fulmars, and other delicacies, to the feeble or inefficient. Of course your widow woman and others who have no husbands to work for the general benefit, are expected when in health to do what they can to con-

tribute in some measure to their own support, by snaring puffins and other poultry at their convenience; but no one who is really unable to work need fear want, as he is sure of his share from the general stock. What a blessed change would it be for the poor of other places (wealthy, liberal, and enlightened,) if a similar system were pursued! So let our philanthropists think of these things.

"But, Oh, o'er all, forget not Kilda's race,
On whose bleak rocks, which brave the wasting tides,
Fair nature's daughter, virtue, yet abides.
Go, just as they, their blameless manners trace!
Then to my ear transmit some gentle song,
Of those whose lives are yet sincere and plain,
Their bounded walks the rugged cliffs along,
And all their prospect but the wintry main.
With sparing temperance at the needful time
They drain the scented spring; or, hunger-prest,
Along the Atlantic rock undreading climb,
And of its eggs despoil the solan's nest.
Thus blest in primal innocence they live,
Sufficed and happy with that frugal fare,
Which tasteful toil and hourly danger give.
Hard is their shallow soil, and bleak and bare;
Nor ever vernal bee was heard to murmur there." *

* COLLINS' *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands.*

We would scarcely have quoted the above if we had chanced to remember at the commencement the concluding line, as it so happened that while entering the Eastern Bay, the very first St. Kilda insect which met our eyes was a small vagrant bee, which flew at a great rate across our bows, and from the slanting course which he pursued was evidently making his way from the adjacent Borrera to the main-island. What was his aim or object, his hope or expectation from the flight? What "odorous bushy shrub" had tempted him across those briny waves?

"What blooming thicket, moist with morning dew?"

Alas! we fear that the floral treasures of St. Kilda are few and feeble, but soon after landing we fortunately found that the insect in question was not a honey-bee, but a sand one.

The natives collect a considerable quantity of sea-fowl eggs in spring and the earlier part of summer. They prefer them when *sour*, that is, as the minister expressed it, when about ten or twelve days old, and just as the incipient bird when boiled forms in the centre "into a thickish flaky matter like milk." During the summer season they eat the young puffins and fulmars

fresh, but towards autumn they collect these and other birds, especially fat young solans just before they fly, for salting and drying. Of course they pluck all the birds of whatever age or kind, without any classifying of the feathers, which they store away damp, dirty, and unpicked. The price they are valued at as payment of rent is 5s. per stone, the tenant getting about 15s. for the same amount in the more southern markets. It seems to be thought that the proprietor obtains a very small rent from the tacksman, but that the latter gains a large proportional profit from the people, —in other words that any sacrifice which the owner inclines to make never reaches the natives, but is intercepted by the tenant, all of course in the fair way of business. It is probably but a small matter, this St. Kilda tack, in the estimation of so enterprising and extensive a dealer as Mr. MacDonald of Loch Inver, and it would certainly be better for these poor people to have no tacksman, but to make the minister the factor, (as he is already the *fac-totum*) and accountable, on receipt of a small per centage for the proceeds of the gatherings from the rocks, and other island produce, plumed or pastoral, and thus a larger

sum would accrue to the proprietor, who might either feather his own nest, if so inclined, or benefit the people by remitting a portion of the profits in their favour. We take it for granted that old women are the same all over the world, and those of St. Kilda would assuredly enjoy a cordial cup of tea if they could get it, just like the inhabitants of the "greater and lesser Cumbrays and the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland." But no such luxury is yet enjoyed by these unsophisticated people,—a small *chaw* of tobacco, or a pinch of snuff, being all that even the males can hope for as a soothing indulgence after a day of toil. Let us therefore be thankful for our "wine and oil and corn," in spite of the sliding scale, restrictive duties, and three per cent. upon our incomes.

In case of being beset by unknown tidal currents, or a sudden shift of wind, we kept at some little distance both from the main-island and its dependencies, after night-fall, but at an early hour of the ensuing morning (Tuesday the 3d of August) we were again at the mouth of Dickson's Bay. Here the minister sent a note ashore to his wife, requesting her to direct some of the natives

to go to a certain cliff, one of the steepest and loftiest in the island, and exhibit for our edification and amusement, a specimen of their daring and agility in the bird-catching department,—and here we had a fresh proof afforded of the estimation in which he is held by his people. Our boat's crew, some of whom were good Gaelic scholars, were closely interrogated on their landing as to what we proposed to do with the minister, why we had kept him from home all night, and whether we had any intention of carrying him off to *America*, or any other foreign country? They added, that if we had the latter object in view, they hoped we would let them know in time, as they were all quite willing to accompany him wherever he might choose to go! This was a high and heartfelt testimony of their strong affection, for it must not be supposed from any thing we have said of their almost penurious mode of life, and frequent hardships, that they are not strongly attached to their native island. The very reverse of this may be inferred from the few examples of their migrating to foreign countries, or even settling in other Scottish islands, or the mainland. St. Kilda, in its far solitude, is their native home,

the scene of all their earliest and best affections, and the resting-place of their fathers and departed kindred, of all those who have sought "Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night:"

> "So the wild surges and the whirlwind's roar,
> But bind them to their barren mountain more."

While bearing towards the appointed place of rendezvous in the Cutter, we enjoyed some splendid tacking off and on the island, beholding from various points its vast and wave-worn caverns, filled with the murmuring sea, its deep dark rocky battlements, and over all the cloud-capped summits of the hoary Connagher, the highest mountain of St. Kilda. As we approached a stupendous precipice we could see the people perched like jack-daws along its edge, and that we might be as near as possible to the scene of action, we got into the small-boat, and rowed (minister and all) towards the mural shore. It was almost fearful to behold it hanging in such huge and ponderous masses over head:—

> "Cliffs of darkness, caves of wonder,
> Echoing the Atlantic's thunder!"

We then stood still upon our oars, and the minister rose, and waved his hat. Suddenly we could hear in the air above us a faint huzzaing sound, and at the same instant three or four men, from different parts of the cliff, threw themselves into the air, and darted some distance downwards, just as spiders drop from the top of a wall. They then swung and capered along the face of the precipice, bounding off at intervals by striking their feet against it, and springing from side to side with as much fearless ease and agility as if they were so many school-boys exercising in a swing a few feet over a soft and balmy clover field. Now they were probably not less than seven hundred feet above the sea, and the cliff was not only perfectly perpendicular in its upper portion, but as it descended it curved backwards as it were, forming a huge rugged hollow portion, eaten into by the angry lashing of the almost ceaseless waves. In this manner, shouting and dancing, they descended a long way towards us, though still suspended at a vast height in air, for it would probably have taken all their cordage joined together to have reached the sea. A great mass of the central portion of the precipice was smoother

than the wall of a well-built house, and it was this portion especially which was not only perpendicular but had its basement arched inwards into an enormous wave-worn grotto, so that any one falling from the summit would drop at once sheer into the sea.

It was on this the smoother portion of the perpendicular mountain that one or two of the cragsmen chiefly displayed their extraordinary powers, because, as there was nothing to interrupt either the rapid descent of the rope, or its lateral movement, or their own outward bounds, we could see them sometimes swinging to and fro after the manner of a pendulum, or dancing in the air with a convulsive motion of the legs and arms (presenting a painful resemblance to men hanging in the agonies of death), or tripping a more light fantastic toe by means of a rapid and vigorous action of the feet against the perpendicular surface of the rock. These men merely capered for our amusement, but caught no birds, for such was in fact the adamantine smoothness of the surface, that not even a winged inhabitant of the air could have found rest for the sole of its foot. But on either side, the precipice though equally steep was more

rugged, and there we could perceive that the cragsmen, having each a rope securely looped beneath his arms, rested occasionally upon his toes, or even crawled with a spider-like motion along projecting ledges, and ever and anon we could see them waving a small white fluttering object, which we might have taken for a pocket-handkerchief, had we not been told it was a feathery fulmar. They twisted their necks, and then looped their heads into a little noose or bight of the rope above them, and by the time the men were drawn again to the top of the rock, each carried up a good bundle of birds along with him. Their object, however, was not to collect, but merely to give us a specimen of their mode of doing so, and they would have reaped a much richer harvest had they proceeded to actual business. But to see them dangling in the air, like spiders from webs of gossamer, the ropes being scarcely visible, owing to the great height from which they were suspended, was in truth a surprising sight. How one man (for such is the case), himself standing with the points of his toes upon the very verge of a precipice, many hundred feet deep, can with such secure and unerring strength sustain the entire weight of

another man bounding from point to point below him with irregular and frequent springs, is what a stranger cannot understand, and could scarcely credit without the "ocular proof." But we ascertained that there is never more than a single man above, supporting the weight of the one below. Each of these couples has as it were two ropes between them. The rope which the upper man holds in his *hands* is fastened round the body and beneath the arms of him who descends, while another rope is pressed by the *foot* of the upper man, and is held in the hand of the lower. One would think that this kind of cross-working would be apt to pull the upper partner from the top of the cliff, and that both would be speedily dashed to pieces or drowned among the roaring rocks below; but it is said that scarcely more than one or two accidents have happened within the memory of the present generation. We were told it once occurred that two men had descended close together, suspended by the same rope, when suddenly the higher of the two perceived that several strands above his head had given way, and that the rope was rapidly rending from the unaccustomed weight. Believing the death

of both to be inevitable if he delayed an instant, and with but small hope even of his own life under existing circumstances, he cut the cord close *beneath* his own body, and consigning his companion to immediate death, was himself drawn to the crest of the precipice just in time to be seized by the neck as the rope gave way. The precise bearings of this sudden act, unpremeditated by the one, certainly unexpected by the other (who like Dirleton probably had had his doubts, though with no time to express them) upon the sister sciences of legislation and morals, might, we presume, be argued by lawyers and logicians as a question of casuistry.

Not a native of the island can swim, a fact which at first surprised us, but on reflection it is evident that when any unfortunate catastrophe does take place no human strength nor skill in any art can save them from destruction. After thus showing off for a sufficient length of time, the rope dancers were hauled to the top, and made their way upwards almost as rapidly as they had descended. We could then also perceive more clearly the uses of the two ropes, for while the man above drew up one of them, hand over hand

as sailors say (just as in sea-fishing you would draw up a cod or conger eel at the end of a line), the man below aided his own ascent by hauling also hand over hand upon the other, which was held by the tenacious foot of his assistant in the higher regions.

We then rowed outwards to the Cutter, and on getting on board astounded the assembled cliffsmen by firing one of our great guns, the long-repeated echoes of which among the deep ravines and vaulted caverns had a magnificent effect, as the tumultuous voice of thunder rolled along those otherwise still and solemn shores.

The day was yet in its prime, a lustrous summer day which might have gilded the palm-crowned glories of an Indian isle. The sky was bright above, and the great ocean heaved around us with a motion so subdued and gentle, that our hearts might have filled with "joy and gladness," were it not that the spirit of melancholy seems never far distant from what is at once so solemn and serene. In truth, the finger of God was in all things more visible than the hand of man, and as we glided through the "great waters," we strongly felt the grandeur of "His wonders in the

deep." Therefore was our cheerfulness almost changed into reverential awe, as we gazed around on all the "dread magnificence" by which we were encompassed, for we felt as if we had entered into one of the great temples of the God of Nature! And if a scene which, however majestic, was still "of the earth," and destined to pass away, could create such elevating thoughts, to what height, past utterance, will not an entrance raise us into that house "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," where no storms nor tempests rage, either in the scowling skies or the far darker bitterer heart of man, but an everlasting joyfulness prevails, "as the angels in heaven."

To describe the infinite variety of views which we now witnessed would be impossible. We beheld them from so many different points, and the natural features are in themselves so various, that if they were detailed in words, they might seem to present an epitome of the mountain scenery of the world. We have already said that the entrance into the bay, and the view upwards into the bosom of the sloping amphitheatre, on a portion of which the village stands, reminded us of Peebles-shire, but for the strange fantastic rugged

outline of the Dun, which forms so conspicuous a feature of the scene. As soon as the great bird-catching drama had been enacted, we took our course towards a group of singular islands, distant about a couple of miles or more from St. Kilda proper, the largest of which the reader will see on the preceding chart distinguished by the name of Borrera. It is of considerable size, though uninhabited except by sheep, and presents a steep though verdurous slope along its eastern surface, the other portions being like the battlements of St. Kilda, dark, rocky, and precipitous. There is a curious subterranean dwelling in its smoother side, being a house constructed with sleeping places in the thickness of the walls, exactly like those which formerly existed in the old village of St. Kilda.* But its roof is level with the surface, and is so overgrown with the natural grass of the hill-side as to be undistinguishable from the surrounding pastures. It is of unknown antiquity, and is not resorted to by such of the St.

* "The inhabitants," says Dean Monro, "have a tradition that it was built by one Stallir, a devout hermit of St. Kilda; and had he indeed travelled the universe he could scarcely have found a more solitary place for a monastic life."

Kildeans as pass a few days occasionally on the island. They prefer for night shelter during these periods a rude hut which they have erected above ground.

Close to Borrera are two magnificent almost mountainous rocks, or stacks, as they are called in those northern districts. That named Stack Ly or Leath is an insular mass about the height of the Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth, but of narrower circumference, and more irregular outline. It forms a favourite haunt of the sea-fowl, and as a breeding place for solan geese may be regarded as one of the wonders of the world. Though not flat upon the top, it is neither rugged nor precipitous there, but rather presents a sharpish edge to one side, and then a gradual descent a certain way downwards, as if a sloping slice had been cut off it, after which it descends again in a more rugged and precipitous form into the sea. On the other side it falls at once from the sharp upper edge above mentioned, straight down into the ocean waters, with of course a variety of rents and rocky ledges, which do not interfere with its general character of abruptness, but afford sufficient footing for its innumerable winged inhabitants. The

more sloping portion of its summit, even when seen from a distance of many miles, seems as white as the snowy peak of a Swiss mountain, and so vast at this time was the number of half-fledged young ones, that even after the thunderous report of one of the Cutter's guns had made the parent birds uplift their myriad wings, the surface seemed as white as ever. Not only the top but every crack and crevice all around, each "buttress and coigne of vantage" is inhabited by sea-fowl, chiefly gannets. It may perhaps convey a better idea of their "numbers numberless" than a more general description, to mention a single fact stated by the minister. Although he himself could perceive not the slightest diminution of their amount, it consisted with his knowledge that *fifteen thousand* had been captured and carried off within the last few weeks.

With a view to get close under and around this great stack, which presented the incongruous features of the "cold flinty rock" and feather-bed combined, and also that we might examine the more precipitous portion of Borrera, and approach towards a third insular rock of great elevation called Stack Narnin, we again took to the boat,

to the great annoyance of the gannets, who having some days preceding been rifled by a party of the natives, seemed much more alarmed by the suspicious motions of the smaller vessel, than by the calm benignant presence of the beautiful Princess Royal. The marine views were really magnificent when we had made our way in the lowly craft between the high and serried edge of the gannet island, and the precipitous western front of Borrera, with the iron-bound peaks of Narnin rising right before us: or when, looking backwards, we beheld between the two former islands the dark majestic outline of St. Kilda, closing the southward view. The gannet isle (Stack Leath) assumes, as indeed do all the others, an infinite variety of forms, as seen from different points. Hitherto it had looked almost lumpy, but on passing towards Borrera, and looking backwards, it then showed a sharp narrow precipitous edge towering over the sea, with a low jutting ridge projecting into the water, —the whole presenting the appearance of the mouth of some huge marine monster, of which the upper jaw was raised aloft, and the under stretched out horizontally, prepared to snap up a ship or two, or a thousand solan geese at one fell swoop.

In regard to the effect which a vast and altogether incalculable flock of sea-fowl, hovering above and around in all directions, produces by what is commonly called "darkening the atmosphere,"—the reader may feel assured that no such thing takes place. This form of speech is merely an unmeaning expression, ignorantly and inaccurately applied in the first place, and servilely repeated ever after. We don't suppose that any one ever saw or could see a more multitudinous flight of birds than we did on this occasion, but the air so far from being darkened, was to our astonished vision rather brightened than otherwise by their snowy plumes. These birds were numerous beyond the calculation of Cocker or Joseph Hume, but who has calculated the heighth and breadth of the deep cerulean heavens, or what amount of feathered millions can intercept the refulgent light of a cloudless summer sun reflected from the sparkling mirror of the unbounded ocean? A bird on wing is, taken singly, a fairy creature "beautiful exceedingly," and when seen in congregated myriads numberless "as leaves in Vallumbrosa," they cease not to be fair and bright as the spray of sparkling waters, or the mild efful-

gence of the milky way. When we behold them soaring above us they shine with a pearly almost transparent lustre, pure as "the bolted snow,"—when we see them on a lower level sailing towards us with pointed beak and clear crystalline eyes, the rich contrast of their creamy coloured heads and stainless backs and ebon pointed wings, whether they glide between us and the darkened rocks of earth, or the azure vault of heaven, is such as rather to gladden than obscure the face of nature. So we shall take it as a personal favour to ourself if no describer of ornithological effects will again henceforward and forever allude to the "darkening of the atmosphere," by any kind or quantity of feathered fowl,—for this, among many other reasons, that it is not true.

Having circumnavigated these lesser isles we returned towards St. Kilda, making again for the bird catching cliff, from whence we coasted south-westwards in the direction of Soa. On this side lies the western or Macleod's Bay, before reaching which you pass under the most precipitous or at least loftiest cliff in all the island. From a more eastern point of view we had previously beheld the lofty Connagher lifting his grizzly head

above the darker cliffs which compose the rocky shore, but on proceeding westerly we found that the seaward side of that mountain formed of itself the barrier to the rolling waves, and descended in one vast unbroken sheet of perpendicular craggy rock at once into the ocean. Sir George Mackenzie informs us that he found the summit (by barometrical measurement) to be about 1450 feet in height. A rounded head forms the extremest top, but the sloping portion is not prolonged, and we should suppose the precipitous cliff itself to be not less than from twelve to thirteen hundred feet high. Some distance beyond this fearful precipice the low green sheltered Western Bay opens gently inwards with a gradual uprising, so as to produce the appearance of a small inland valley backed by pastoral hills,—a repetition in its way (though on a smaller scale) of Dickson's Bay. Although we can't speak from experience of the nature of the bottom as anchorage ground, we believe that a vessel might always find shelter in one or other of these bays. About eighteen months before our visit a suspicious looking brig dodged about in this way under the lee of the island, from one harbourage to the other, usually

keeping, as if for concealment from the distance, as near the cliffs as possible. This she did for ten days, without ever sending a boat ashore, or holding any communication with the island. At last Mr. Mackenzie ventured to go on board. On ascending the deck he found captain and crew armed to the teeth, but as soon as they perceived the peaceful nature of the Scotch minister and his quiet St. Kildeans, they put their weapons aside, and received them with the most courteous kindness and hospitality, treating them to sundry foreign wines which these good people had never before either seen or heard of. No English was spoken on board, nor any other tongue which Mr. Mackenzie could comprehend. The captain was an uncommonly handsome man, of fine manners, though of swarthy complexion, and foreign aspect. She cruized at times off the island, and was observed to hold communication with a smaller vessel, which seemed to come from the direction of the mainland. This brig was most likely a Spanish smuggler.

To the southward of Macleod's Bay the cliffs again become lofty, and extremely picturesque, and nothing can be finer than the Sound which

divides Soa from St. Kilda. Soa signifies the good island, and is so called by reason of its prolific nature, that is, the abundance of its feathered produce. From this same sound rise three peculiar stacks, lofty, though otherwise of small dimensions. Of these the one called Biorach, or the pointed stack, is regarded as the most difficult rock which any St. Kilda man can climb. Another named Stack Soa, or the good stack, so called in honour of its teeming mother, and for the same reason, produces an abundant crop of fowls. The third, Stack Donadh, or the bad stack, is the smallest and least productive of the whole,—a large and solitary black backed gull (*Larus marinus*) having occupied its summit for many years. Soa itself is a large island, probably as long though not so broad as Borrera. When viewed from certain points it very accurately resembles a tiger, or other great feline monster, couching for its prey. Its central portions are of great height, and its cliffs along shore every where both steep and stupendous. Towards its northern end is a small stack called Plasta (it appears on our reduced plan like a grain of sand), of picturesque aspect, with

another near it of which we either knew not, or have forgotten, the name.

When off the southern end of Soà, the views of its wild and varied cliffs, its detached fantastic stacks, the distant form of the then cloud-capped Borrera, with the rugged southern coast of St. Kilda stretching away eastwards, and over all the aspiring Connagher, and less lofty though more extended range of Mulloch-More, afforded a combination of very striking and peculiar pictures.

The southern opening of the Sound of Soa, is itself extremely fine. Two of its stacks are so placed as almost to connect it with St. Kilda, and are themselves of very curious and fantastic forms. From a particular point of view one of these rocks presented the appearance of a gigantic nondescript animal trying to wade across to Soa, while the other assumed at times a somewhat complex aspect, presenting as it were alternately the characters of an old beggar woman, a Scotch preacher, and an Egyptian sphynx. Perhaps one of the finest subjects for a picture on this side of St. Kilda, is the view from the eastward of Craigan-arrogitch, or the silver craig, taking in the range

of cliffs opposed to those of Soa, and looking down the sound, guarded by its dark and lofty rocks. These seemed to vary both in shape and colour, for the day was near its close, and the golden light of evening was now streaming from behind the deepening purple of their giant forms.

Caverns prevail along the bases of these ponderous cliffs, and one of the most remarkable of those on the southern side is that named Damph-an-Eiranich, so called from the fact which follows. An Irishman was crossing an inlet of his own green isle, with a keg of whisky to make merry with his father and other friends one Christmas morning, but being carried out to sea by a squall, he was driven he knew not where, till he found himself at the mouth of a cave in St. Kilda. He was descried by the natives from the cliffs, who at first entertained a superstitious fear of an individual who they thought must have either dropt from the clouds, or risen from the sea, but so soon as they perceived his boat, they lowered their ropes, and drew him up when he was almost gone from want. He remained with them for about a year, before an opportunity occurred of his being conveyed to his own country.

As we proceeded onwards the outline of Soa was very striking, as was also that of the main-island, whether regarded by itself or in combination with the detached portions of this most wild and wonderful group, and ere long, after passing many an "antre vast" and frowning cliff, we came again upon the outer base of the Dun, and doubling that rugged promontory, the sweet village bay once more received us in its peaceful haven.

As it was now the close of day we did not land again, but sent our good minister ashore in the boat. We could then observe that almost the entire population of the island was assembled to receive him at the landing-place, and our men told us that it seemed a truly happy meeting. He himself had greatly enjoyed his little cruize from home of nearly two days and a night; and the Soa-side of St. Kilda he had never before seen from the sea. We ourselves were much gratified by all we saw and heard, and will long cherish the recollection of scenes which made a deep impression upon our minds, however feebly we may have conveyed it to those of others. Our acquaintance with Mr. Mackenzie was also a source of great satisfaction,

and we hope for its renewal at some future time. There is something, we think, very solemn and even elevating in the idea of that person's position, humble and almost forlorn though it may seem. Separated so entirely from the world, with not a single native on the island who can enter into any community of subjects with him, so far as relates to the ordinary topics which occupy the minds of other men, or to those unforgotten though departed periods of his own earlier life to which in secret he cannot help reverting, his thoughts must become disentangled from many frivolous and vain expectations and pursuits by which those of others are so often "disquieted within them:"—and so turning from a world which he cannot reach, and has ceased to desire, what in exchange does he seek for? He goes up to the mountain of the Lord, to the "House of the God of Jacob;" and so his barren rock, with all its bitter endurances, when softened by a Saviour's love, is made to yield that fountain of sweet water which springeth up into eternal life, and thus he finds rest unto his soul. What then to him are the howling tempests, or the ragings of the winter sea, as it rolls its tumultuous waves in vain though dread array around

those lonesome dwellings? Why should he encourage vexing thoughts, or any "fearful looking forward," who possesses "the peace of God, which passeth understanding?" Does he not daily behold in congregated myriads, those "fowls of the air" which sow not, neither reap, nor gather into barns though "their heavenly Father feedeth them?" Therefore he takes no thought, saying, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" for his heavenly Father knoweth that he hath need of all these things, and "He is faithful who promised."

CHAPTER II.

ST. KILDA—CONTINUED.

We shall now note down a few additional memoranda relating chiefly to the zoology of St. Kilda, and shall afterwards proceed to a brief sketch of the early history of the island.

St. Kilda possesses no native species of quadruped. Goats were plentiful among the rocks at a recent period, but they were found to disturb the birds in their hatching places, and have been destroyed. More than enough of yelping curs were seen about the cottage doors,—lank long-limbed creatures of the terrier kind, with what seemed a dash of the shepherd's dog, and exhibiting something of a jackal aspect, though the tail was long. They are probably useful in clearing garbage from around the houses, in the too near neighbourhood of which are often scattered the unsavoury remnants of various rock birds, which these prowlers devour upon the legal principle of "superflua non no-scent," and they are

right so far as concerns the smell. Besides sheep, cattle, one or two small horses, and the dogs aforesaid, the only other four-footed creatures are mice, introduced in vessels either from the Outer Hebrides, or the mainland. Rats are fortunately still unknown, and notwithstanding the murky climate and the many caverns, the twilight loving bat has not been seen. A few seals are occasionally observed around the shores.

Of the feathered tribes we have perhaps already said more than enough. There are now no eagles either on the main-island or its dependencies. The finest accipitrine bird of prey is the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). The only other species of the tribe is the kestril (*F. tinnunculus*). Of the crow kind the raven (*Corvus corax*) occurs in limited numbers. The grey or hooded-crow (*C. cornix*) is much more common. Starlings are numerous, thrushes frequent, while blackbirds are only occasional visitants. We saw no sparrows. Two species of titlark occur in St. Kilda,—*Anthus pratensis* and *aquaticus*. The corn-bunting (*Emberiza miliaria*, is well known. The only linnet seems to be the twite (*Linota montium*). The cuckoo is observed from time to time. The

minister described a beautiful foreign bird, which he saw one season for several weeks. It was of a lustrous green and blue colour, extremely brilliant when the sun shone upon its glancing plumes. From his description of its size, form, and general aspect, we have no doubt it was the roller (*Coracias garrulus*), a species well known in Germany, and a summer migrant as far north as Sweden. There are no resident grouse, or game birds of any kind in St. Kilda, but Mr. MacKenzie once noticed a single Ptarmigan on the hill-side one winter day after the prevalence of strong easterly winds.

Of the grallatorial order we perceived the oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) by sight, and the corn-crake or land-rail (*Rallus crex*) by sound. Mr. John Macgillivray has recorded the Dunlin or sand-lark (*Tringa variabilis*) as a native species, and although we neither saw nor heard of herons, they are mentioned by the older writers. Several other species occur at irregular intervals, but on the whole there are few breeding land birds in this quarter, the web-footed tribes, or sea-fowl forming by far the more numerous and important division. Perhaps the most accurate and

interesting mode of exhibiting the characteristic features of the ornithology of the St. Kilda group of islands will be by presenting a few extracts from Mr. MacKenzie's MS. memoranda, which contain occasional references to other more important points.*

Of the month of *January* he observes, "Our coasts continue dead, lonely, and deserted. Soon they will receive their inhabitants. A gannet has been seen as soon as the 13th day of this month. By the beginning of next month a good number of them will be on their accustomed rocks. A species of small gull visits us at present. Rooks†(?) and the black-hood crow are numerous. The latter very troublesome, taking the thatch off the houses, seeking for grains and insects which rest in the thatch. We have upon the whole good

* For the use of these we have to thank Mr. Tawse, the assiduous Secretary to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

† We think it more likely that the common black or carrion crow (*Corvus corone*) is here indicated than the actual rook —*C. frugilegus*. The latter is however spreading westwards, having, for example, bred for the first time in Colonsay this summer (1841).

winter weather. A considerable quantity of snow fell of late. The want of fuel is very much felt. Every good day the natives are from hill to hill, and from cliff to crevice, in search of any thing that burns."

February.—" The shearwater has come to these islands the latter end of this month. One third of all the gannets that arrive this year should now be about our rocks. The black guillimot having assumed the summer plumage is now seen. The foolish guillimot should be now come. Our religious meetings have been regularly attended all the season. The scarcity of food and fuel, which is now felt in their intensity, gives a sombre aspect to every thing around us."

March.—" All the birds are now come except the puffin. Though the last in coming it is the first generally that is now caught. In good calm weather the gannets can be found very early. Formerly the black and particularly the foolish guillimot used to be very early caught, but (their mode of capture) being rather more dangerous and certainly more laborious, they discontinued. The shearwater has been caught, but not in abundance. The puffin will come next week—he will keep his

day. All the birds are so regular in the time of leaving and coming, laying and hatching, that a kind of calender might be constructed from their migrations." How well this illustrates the beautiful expression of Scripture,—" Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming."

April.—" All classes of sea-fowl are during this month about the island,—I mean all such as are accustomed to this coast. About the end of it the puffin, gannet, shearwater, and black guillimot, begin to lay. No fuel has been got yet; though it should be dry for a few days, there is not a sufficient length of dry weather to dry turf. By the coming of the boat from Harris, and the arrival of the birds, their (the people's) food is greatly improved. Every family got from forty to fifty of the gannets, besides small fowl. Thanks be to Almighty God for his kindness to us."

May.—" This is by far the most important season in the year to the fowler. All the birds lay in this month except the stormy petrel, which lays next month. The reason that so many sea-fowl congregate upon our rocky islands, is to pro-

pagate their kind. Along with those which come to breed, a considerable number of barren birds arrive at the same time, and these lounge about the rocks during all the period of the others' stay. Every species is thus accompanied."*

June.—"The greater part of the fowls, if suffered to hatch the first eggs they lay, have them hatched by the latter end of this month. If deprived of the first laid eggs, that keeps them back two or three weeks, for they take sixteen days to lay the second, and a few will not lay again at all. None of the fulmars lay a second egg; but all the rest lay a second and even a third, at equal periods between, but no more that season. However, the whole of each species do not lay the second egg, still fewer the third, so that on a ledge where the first time twenty eggs might be found, the second time not above fifteen or sixteen can be got, and the third time not more

* It has been suggested that these might be young birds,—but in the case of the solan goose, it could not be so, as their plumage (which takes several seasons to become perfect) was that of the adult bird. They were more probably bachelors and old maids.

than twelve or thirteen.* The people are ill off for fuel yet, for they have got but little, and still worse off for food."

July.—"All birds are rearing their young, except the stormy petrel, during this month; but that little bird is only beginning to lay about the commencement of it. The people are suffering very much from want of food. During spring, ere the birds came, they literally cleared the shore not only of shell-fish, but even of a species of sea-weed that grows abundantly on the rocks within the sea-mark. For a time then they were better off, particularly as long as fresh eggs could be got. Now the weather is coarse, birds cannot be found, at least in such abundance as their needs require. Sorrel boiled in water is the principal part of the food of some, and even that grass is getting scarce. All that was near is exhausted,

* We may here note that most of the rock-birds of St. Kilda (solans, puffins, fulmars, guillimots, &c.) lay only a single egg for each hatch. The gulls lay three, except the great black backed (*Larus marinus*) which is said to deposit, at least occasionally, only two. St. Kilda is the only breeding place in Britain for the fulmar. No solan geese settle on St. Kilda proper, but dwell in Borrera and the adjoining stacks.

and they go to the rocks for it, where formerly they used to go for birds only."

August.—" In the beginning of this month the guillimots and razor-bills left their rocks, having got their young with them; the puffins about the 10th and also the kittywakes; and towards the end the fulmar, having been robbed of its young."

September.—" The greater part of the young gannets, with the old ones, leave our rocks about the end of this month. Some of the stormy petrels are also gone with their young. All birds leave our rocks as they get their young ones with them. They come in good condition and leave us very poor. The barley is not half shorn yet, nor the oats. This is decidedly the wetest and windiest season I remember.* No fuel is got yet, neither is it likely that any will be this season. How the year is to be gone through I know not. Were it not for the promise that our bread would

* Mr. MacKenzie's memoranda apply to August—July, of the years 1840—1. He commences with August, and goes on consecutively, but for the sake of a better ornithological sequence, we have commenced with January 1841, and concluded with December, although that and the four preceding months belong to the former year.

be given us and our water made sure, we would feel very uneasy."

October.—" The whole of the gannets are away from our rocks, and even the stormy petrel,—the last of the sea-fowl. A few gulls, cormorants, and black guillimots which turn greyish-white, remain about the shore all the year. The fulmar returns for the first time, after being robbed of its young, about the end of the month, and continues coming to land every day the wind is from the west. A species of small ducks visit the shores, and now and then an eider-duck. When the weather is stormy wild-geese, mire-ducks, and a few straggling swans, may be seen during this and the two following months. Our crops are housed. The quantity of straw is large, but the grain very small. Potatoes are very defective, not above half an ordinary crop. No fuel has been got yet. Every thing seems to conspire against us this season."

November.—" This is the deadest month of the year. The bulk of the fowls having deserted our coast leaves the rocks so black and dead. There is pleasure in seeing any thing move in this more than solitary place. Our minds seem to be re-

vived by seeing a few wild fowls, such as swans, geese, woodcocks and snipes, though the most of them pay us but a short visit on their way, no doubt, to more hospitable climes."

December.—"What has passed of this winter has been rather mild. All kinds of fowls that come hither to breed are gone, long ago, to their winter quarters. Snipes, wrens, (?) crows, ravens, and hawks, remain all the year round. Blackbirds, thrushes, rooks, lapwings, curlews, herons, ducks, &c. visit us, and some of them remain with us a long while in winter. The people have never been worse off for fuel. Their provisions are not more abundant. Last year was not good; but this one turns out a third less. Lord have mercy upon us."

We have already stated in a general way the little that we know regarding the fishes of these rocky shores. There are no reptiles of any kind, so we shall proceed, and briefly, to the insects.

Little of course is known of the entomology of St. Kilda, and our own short sojourn, with so many other sights to see during its continuance, scarcely admitted of any personal observation of that department. We understood, however, from

the minister, that although there were several kinds of moth, yet not a single species of diurnal lepidopterous insect, or butterfly, had ever been seen upon the island, thus showing, as we thought, that St. Kilda was beyond the line of their western distribution, although we had previously ascertained their existence, in a certain measure, throughout the entire extent of that great insular region which extends more easterly from Barra Head to the Butt of Lewis. Our too hasty conclusion however on this subject has been recently corrected by the published observations of Mr. John Macgillivray, who found there the small pale coloured butterfly (*Hipparchia pamphilus*).* We have already stated that we observed a small wild bee fly across the Cutter as we entered the bay, and the actual existence of a species of that industrious order was afterwards confirmed on landing. House flies and other diptera were common. It is probable that many kinds of carcass

* Account of the Island of St. Kilda, chiefly with reference to its natural history; from Notes made during a visit in July 1840. By Mr. JOHN MACGILLIVRAY.—Professor Jameson's *New Philosophical Journal*, vol. xxxii., p. 47.

eating coleoptera exist in considerable quantities, as they must find an abundant *pabulum* in the half putrid remnants of fulmars, puffins, and other poultry, the viscera of which are somewhat too perceptible both to eye and nose around the different dwellings. *Elaphrus lapponicus* and *Byrrhus æneus* are mentioned as indigenous by the last named observer, who perceived also *Carabus catenulatus* and *granulatus* (*cancellatus* of most authors), *Elaphrus cupreus* and *tesselatus*, and *Geotrupes sylvaticus*. From various inquiries we came to the conclusion that no insect of the orthopterous order exists upon this island, at least Mr. MacKenzie had never seen or heard of any thing resembling either grasshopper, cockroach, or cricket. However the domestic genera *Pulex* and *Pediculus* are by no means unknown, though bugs have not yet visited St. Kilda. Spiders of various sorts exist, and their out of door manipulations are found to afford a pretty sure index of the weather to those accustomed to that species of meteorological observation.

Having in the preceding portion of this chapter concluded what may be called our personal obser-

vations on this remote and remarkable island, we shall now add a few miscellaneous remarks collected from the writings of the older authors.

We believe that little is really known regarding the early history or colonization of St. Kilda. The prevailing belief is that its people were offsets from the Long Island, and partake with these Outer Hebrideans in the compound blood of Celt and Northman. Others maintain their Irish origin, and suppose from the name of the old fort already mentioned (Dun-fir-Bholug,—the castle of the men of quivers), that they are descended from the Fir-Bolgs, a people of unknown ancestry, who settled once upon a time in Greece, under the captainship of Simon Breac, and whose posterity being there sorely oppressed, seized a fleet belonging to their persecutors, and sailed for Ireland. The people themselves in Macaulay's time cherished a tradition that one Macquin, a Hibernian rover, was the first person who settled himself and a small colony of his countrymen in St Kilda. It is also thought to have been first occupied as a stronghold by pirates. Be these suppositions as they may, it seems impossible to trace the history of St. Kilda with any certainty beyond the four-

teenth century. Within that period it is mentioned in a charter granted by John Lord of the Isles to his son Reginald (confirmed by Robert II.) under the name of *Hirt*,—its present appellation being scarcely traceable 250 years back.

The more ancient denomination just named signifies *land*, and many people, especially natives, see no reason to doubt that their ancestors should not have dwelt there from the beginning. If, indeed, the most enlightened nation of ancient Greece gloried in the title of Autochthones, what marvel is there that the sons of Hirta should believe, and so believing, rejoice, that they too are descended from mother earth? The great argument used by Tacitus to prove that the ancient inhabitants of Germany were *Indigenæ*, was, that no man in his senses would leave Africa, Asia, or the south of Europe, to settle in so dismal a region. Perhaps upon this principle, it may also be well maintained that the St. Kildeans must likewise be the natural product of the soil.

It appears, then, that St. Kilda in the fourteenth century pertained to the Macdonalds of the Isles. "How at the end of two or three generations, the property of this isle was transferred

from the successors of Reginald, the predecessor of Clan-Ranald, to the family of Sleat, now represented by Sir James Macdonald, and how in process of time it fell into the hands of the clan that now possesses it, is an useless inquiry; and, were the question of greater importance, so contradictory are the accounts given, and so slender the historical evidences on every side, that any judicious person will choose to leave the matter undetermined. At this time the proprietor is Norman Macleod of Macleod, and his ancestors have possessed it for at least two hundred years." So sang Kenneth Macaulay in the year of grace 1764. We regret to add, that the possessions of the *Siol Tormod*, or Macleods of Macleod (Harris, Dunvegan, Glenelg), are now less extensive than of old, and so St. Kilda has passed by purchase to John Macpherson Macleod, Esq., a Christian-minded gentleman, we understand, of humane and liberal spirit.

In regard to the ecclesiastical history of St. Kilda, it was probably Christianized by some early disciple of the Culdee church, and may have derived its name from that circumstance. We believe that there is no such gentleman as

Kilda in the calendar; but the Celtic term *kil*, or rather *cille*, is applied to a place of sepulture, or it may be also (like the Latin *cella*), to the cell or chapel of a devotee, and then by a kind of misty and imaginative personation, the prefix St. is added,—thus investing with something of a spiritual character the wild and rocky region of the fulmar and gannet. There does not seem to have been any resident priest of the Roman Catholic persuasion attached to the island, at least for some time prior to the period at which our Reformation reached the Western Isles. "The inhabitants of Hirta," says Buchanan, "are totally unacquainted with all arts, and more especially with religion. The proprietor of the island, after the summer solstice, sends thither his procurator, and in his company a priest, who is to baptize the children born in the preceding year. But in the absence of a priest on that occasion, every one baptizes his own children."* Even for a hundred and fifty years after, it appears from various notices which we possess of the doings of certain native impostors in St.

* *Hist.*, lib. i., c. 41.

Kilda, that no efficient or healthy spiritual superintendence was exercised in the island.

We presume that the first Presbyterian minister settled among them was the Rev. Alexander Buchan, in 1705. They had however enjoyed at least the occasional services of the Scottish clergy prior to that time, as will appear from the following exposition.

Martin's work* was printed in the year 1698, and is the first with which we are acquainted by an eye-witness,—the accounts given by Buchanan and Sir Robert Sibbald being statements at second hand.

The proprietor of St. Kilda at that period was the Laird of Macleod, who "heartily recommending the care of the inhabitants of St. Kilda to Mr. John Campbell, minister of Harris," our author embraced the opportunity to accompany him. They experienced a prolonged passage, but at last made the island of Borrera. "While the sailors were tugging at the oars, we plied them with plenty of aquavitæ to support them, whose borrow-

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* *A Voyage to St. Kilda, the remotest of all the Hybrides or Western Isles of Scotland.* By M. MARTIN, Gent. 1698.

ed spirits so far wasted their own that upon our arrival at Borrera there was scarce one of them able to manage cable or anchor." They confirmed the fact of the thievish propensities of solan geese, who it seems steal each others grass. "One of them finding his neighbour's nest without the fowl, lays hold on the opportunity, and steals from it as much grass as he could conveniently carry off, taking his flight towards the ocean; from thence he presently returns, as if he had made a foreign purchase; but it does not pass for such; for the owner had discovered the fact, before the thief had got out of sight, and too nimble for his cunning, waits his return, all armed with fury, and engages him desperately; this bloody battle was fought above our heads, and proved fatal to the thief, who fell dead so near our boat, that our men took him up, and presently dressed and eat him." We admire the delicate tact of ornithological observation, which detected the very feelings of the aggressor (as a custom-house officer would distinguish home-grown tobacco) returning *as if he had made a foreign purchase.* On landing at St. Kilda there was a lodging prepared for them, and "according to the ancient custom of

the place the officer who presides over them in the steward's absence summoned the inhabitants, who by consent agreed upon a daily maintenance for us, as bread, butter, cheese, mutton, fowls, eggs, fire, &c. all which was to be given in at our lodging twice every day; this was done in the most regular manner, each family by turns paying their quota proportionally to their lands: I remember the allowance for each man per diem, beside a barley cake was eighteen eggs laid by the fowl called by them lavy,* and a greater number of the lesser eggs, as they differed in proportion; the largest of these eggs is near in bigness to that of a goose, the rest of the eggs gradually of a lesser size. We had the curiosity after three weeks residence to make a calculation of the number of eggs bestowed upon those of our boat and the steward's birlin, or galley; the whole amounted to sixteen thousand eggs."

Martin then mentions that on the southern part of the East Bay is "an old ruinous fort called the Down," to the remnants of which we

* The lavy is synonymous with the foolish guillimot,—*Uria troile* of naturalists.

have already alluded. He describes the landward portion of the West Bay under the name of the Female Warrior's Glen. This lady was a famed heroine in their traditionary history, and was much addicted to hunting, as " in her days all the space betwixt this isle and that of Harris, was one continued tract of dry land. Some years ago a pair of large deer's horns were found in the top of Oterveaul-hill, almost a foot under ground, and a wooden dish full of deer's grease." Various pure springs excite his admiration, and the taste of one called the Well of Youth was so delightful, " that for several weeks after, the best fountains in the adjacent isles seemed to have lost their relish." We ourselves drank very little water after leaving St. Kilda. The number of sheep generally maintained on the principal island and its dependencies was about 2000, and there were eighteen horses " all of a red colour, very low and smooth skinned, and are employed in carrying turf and corn, and at their Anniversary Cavalcade, of which hereafter. The cows, which are about nineteen in number, small and great, have their foreheads white and black, which is discernible at a great distance, are of a low stature, but fat and sweet

beef; the dogs, cats, and all the sea-fowls of this isle are speckled." We doubt the accuracy of the last clause of the verse. He mentions the abundance of various kinds of sea-fish, and their unproductive mode of capture (which still prevails), being fished from the rocks, " for they have neither nets nor long lines." The crew of a boat who had landed from a vessel for water, discerning a prodigious number of eggs upon the rocks, were sufficiently adventurous to scale them, and at length obtained a competent supply, " which one of the seamen was industrious enough to put into his breeches, which he took off for that purpose." But some of the inhabitants took offence either at the capture itself or the mode of carriage, and rolled a few loose stones upon the seamen, which so alarmed them that they took to flight " abandoning both breeches and eggs for their own safety; and the tarpawlin breeches were no small ornament in a place where all wore grided plaids."

Mr. Martin next favours us with a few ornithological observations, stating that " the land fowls produced here are hawks, extraordinary good, eagles, plovers, wrens, stone-chacker, craker,

cuckoo; this last is said very rarely to be seen here, and that upon extraordinary occasions, such as the death of the proprietor Macleod, the Steward's death, or the arrival of some notable stranger." We listened for its wandering voice in vain, and as the proprietor happily continues well, and the stewardship has been long abolished, we drew the painful conclusion that none of us was worth a cuckoo's song. "The sea-fowl are first, gair-fowl, being the stateliest, as well as the largest sort, and above the size of a solan-goose, of a black colour, red about the eyes, a large white spot under each, a long broad bill; it stands statély, its whole body erected, its wings short, flies not at all; lays its egg upon the bare rock, which if taken away she lays no more for that year." The bird above alluded to is the great auk, *Alca impennis* of naturalists. It is one of the largest of the European web-footed water-fowl, and is now confined chiefly to the southern coasts of Greenland and Iceland. It occurs occasionally among the Feroe Islands, and has once or twice been seen in those of Orkney. Mr. Bullock, during his first tour in the latter country, had the pleasure of chasing one in a six-oared barge

for several hours, but its rapidity under water baffled pursuit. Its powers of swimming and diving probably exceed those of any other species of the feathered race. It has been seen cresting the waves during the prevalence of the most fearful storms, or shooting through the raging surf with the straightness and rapidity of an arrow. We believe it to be a rare and only occasional species, even in St. Kilda.* A specimen was captured there a good many years ago by Mr. Maclellan, then tacksman of Scalpa, on the Isle of Glass, and presented to Mr. Stevenson, civil engineer. In the course of its homeward journey in the Light-House Yacht, as recorded by Dr. Fleming, it was permitted occasionally to sport in

* "The St. Kildeans," says Macaulay, "do not receive an annual visit from this strange bird, as from all the rest in the list, and from many more. It keeps at a distance from them, they know not where, for a course of years. From what land or ocean it makes its uncertain voyages to their isle is perhaps a mystery in nature. A gentleman who had been in the West Indies informed me that, according to the description given of him, he must be the Penguin of that clime, a fowl that points out the proper soundings to sea-faring people."—*History of St. Kilda*, p. 157. It is a northern bird, and has nothing whatever to do with the penguin, or any other southern production.

the water, with a cord fastened to one leg, and even with this restraining memento it performed its oblutions under water with a power and rapidity that would have set pursuit at defiance. At last its love of liberty proved stronger than the cord by which that liberty was restrained, for during a subsequent washing with which it was indulged by its considerate master, it made its escape and was soon far beyond the rower's reach.

In regard to the people, Martin observes that they have generally good voices and sound lungs, to which "the solan goose egg supped raw doth not a little contribute; they are seldom troubled with a cough, except at the steward's landing, which is no less rare than firmly believed by the inhabitants of the adjacent isles." "Their drink is water or whey, commonly: They brew ale but rarely, using the juice of nettle roots, which they put in a dish with a little barley-meal dough; these sewens (*i. e.* flummery) being blended together produce yest, which puts their wort into a ferment and makes good ale, which when plentifully drank of, generally disposes them to dance merrily."* "We made particular enquiry after

* According to Dean Monro, they seem at an earlier period (prior to 1594), to have been made somewhat more than merry

the number of solan geese consumed by each family in the year before we came there, and it

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by a corresponding potation. "The said Stewart, as himself tauld me, uses to take ane maske of malt ther with a masking fatt, and makes his malt, and ere the fatt be ready, the commons of the town, baith men, weemen, and bairns, puts their hands in the fatt, and findis it sweeit, and eets the greyns after the sweeitness thereof, quhilk they leave nather wirt or draffe unsuppit out ther, quharwith baith men, women, and bairns, were deid drunk, sua that they could not stand upon their feet." Reprint in *Miscellanea Scottica*, ii. 142. After such doings we need scarcely wonder that the very fowls of the air should change their natural language. "The solan geese," says Martin, "have always some of their number keeping sentry in the night, and if they are surprised, as it often happens, all the flock are taken one after another; but if the sentinel be awake at the approach of the creeping fowlers, and hear a noise, it cries softly, *grog, grog*, at which the flock move not; but if the sentinel sees or hears the fowler approaching, he cries quickly, *bir, bir*, which would seem to import danger, since immediately after the whole tribe take wing."—*Ibid.*, p. 28. Being curious as an ornithologist to ascertain the truth of this alleged fact, we paid particular attention to it during the two nights which we passed off and on St. Kilda, and we can declare upon our honour that on each of these we several times most distinctly heard a voice give utterance to the words *grog, grog*, but whether it came from the solan geese or the sailors, still remains to be proved. The other monosyllable *bir, bir*, (pronounced *beer, beer*,) was also heard frequently, but almost always in the earlier portion of the day, especially during the prevalence of warm weather.

amounted in the whole to 22,600, which they said was less than the ordinary number, a great many being lost by the badness of the season, and the great current into which they are obliged to be thrown when taken, the rock being of so extraordinary a height that they cannot reach the boat." It is alleged by some gastronomers that eating a solan goose improves the appetite, and serves as an excellent whet before dinner. If so, who can set bounds to the hunger unappeased of these poor St. Kildeans, after they have consumed among them in an ordinary season some score thousands. We now doubt the fact more than ever, upon a general principle of natural theology, that Providence would not so place a people on a barren rock, with the additional disadvantage of being made all the hungrier by every meal. We hope, however, that the following pleasing picture still applies to them, notwithstanding what we have already said regarding their frequently severe privations. "The inhabitants of St. Kilda are much happier than the generality of mankind, being almost the only people in the world who feel the sweetness of true liberty: what the condition of the people in the golden age is

feigned by the poets to be, that theirs really is; I mean in innocency and simplicity, purity, mutual love, and cordial friendship; free from solicitous cares, and anxious covetousness; from envy, deceit, and dissimulation; from ambition and pride, and the consequences that attend them. They are altogether ignorant of the vices of foreigners, and governed by the dictates of reason and Christianity, as it was first delivered to them by those heroic souls whose zeal moved them to undergo danger and trouble to plant religion here, in one of the remotest corners of the world."

The next work regarding St. Kilda we have to notice, is that of the Rev. Kenneth Macaulay, who paid his visit in the month of June 1758.* Soon after passing Lavenish, and approaching the Eastern Bay, he discovered the Dun, "a strangely formed wall of dreary rocks, which face a part of

* *The History of St. Kilda, containing a Description of this Remarkable Island, the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, the Religious and Pagan Antiquities there found, with many other curious and interesting particulars.* By the Rev. Mr. Kenneth Macaulay, Minister of Ardnamurchan, Missionary to the Island, from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. 1764.

St. Kilda. These rocks appearing through the medium of a very thick fog, rose to our view to a stupendous height, though quite inconsiderable, we afterwards found, if compared to others on the same coast." On nearing the hoped-for landing place (which he names the Saddle), within the Bay, he found he could not land, owing to the fury of the wind which blew within the Bay. "Reduced to almost the last extremity, we dropped anchor before the Saddle, and made a shift to stand there for five hours more, in a most distressing condition, drenched all over, shivering with cold, and under the dreadful apprehension of being swallowed up every moment." This worthy minister seems on the whole, when any of the elements asserted their ancient privileges, to have been in a considerable quandary.

He describes the mountain heights as five in number, and "the fifth, which rises gradually from the head of the Bay, is, without the smallest exaggeration, a real prodigy in its kind, and may perhaps not unjustly be styled the Teneriffe of Britain: the name of it is *Conagra*." He adds, "I made a shift to take its height with some degree of exactness, and found it no less than 900

fathoms." Now a fathom being generally reputed six feet, and 6 times 900 being universally allowed to be 5400, the number last named gives the height in feet, which is exceedingly well for so small a base as St. Kilda, and would, if true, make it really a most Teneriffic object. But there is no doubt of the fact, that its actual elevation does not exceed thirteen or fourteen hundred feet. "Had I never seen," says the Minister, "this immense mass, I should very probably dispute the credibility of the account now given, just as much as any one else may do, after perusing this account." Our having seen it is our chief reason for not only disputing but denying the point in question.

We have mentioned that there is only a single boat in St. Kilda, and the same seems to have been the case in Mr. Macaulay's time. One cannot help feeling surprised at this, considering the risk of accident to their single craft, and the frequency with which the cragsmen are intentionally left for several days on the detached islands, while collecting birds and eggs. An accident of the kind alluded to occurred some time after Mr. Macaulay's visit, that is, in the year 1759. In

the beginning of October of that year, nineteen men put to sea from the main-island bound for Borrera; ten of these landed there, while the remaining nine returned towards St. Kilda; but for three successive days the wind blew with such fury, that there was no possibility of landing. The crew sheltered themselves under the lee side of a lofty rock, being nearly starved through cold and hunger. On the fourth day they made for the Bay, though with little hope of safety, and steering for the sandy portion of the beach, they attempted a landing, during which three men were washed away, the six others being thrown upon the beach. The boat was broken to pieces. The unhappy men left at Borrera soon became aware of their own disconsolate situation. They immediately began to collect a store of sea-fowl, probably by that time just upon the wing for southern regions. There was also a small stock of sheep upon the island, and Stallir's subterranean dwelling before-mentioned. There they slept securely during night, and loitered away the winter as they best could. On the return of the sea-fowl in March, they resumed their accustomed occupation, and laid in a large store of

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birds, sufficient, besides supplying their own necessities, to load the Steward's eight-oared boat. Left on that lonely rock in October, they were not relieved till June. By that time most of them were clad in sheep-skins, or the feathered garments of the larger sea-fowl tacked together. They must have formed a grotesque group of Robinson Crusoes.

Mr. Macaulay refers to the fact that the people of St. Kilda were formerly much more numerous than in his time. In the year 1758 he found only 88 inhabitants, while according to Martin there were 180 in the year 1697. It is known, however, that a contagious distemper, believed to have been the small-pox, swept away the greater part of the population early in the last century. It is said that one of the people died of it during a visit to Harris, and that his clothes being carried home conveyed the infection to St. Kilda. "Very few of that little community," observes Mr. Macaulay, "escaped the plague of that year; of twenty-one families, four grown persons only remained, and these had the burden of twenty-six orphans to support. That these four lived was owing to what the very men

who were saved must have at first called a singular misfortune. Before the distemper was propagated, three men and eight boys were sent into one of their islands, with a design of catching solan geese for the benefit of the whole community. An universal confusion and mortality ensuing at home, they continued there from the middle of August till about the middle of May in the following year. The boat in which these men had been wafted over into that island was brought back to Hirta (St. Kilda) before the distemper became epidemical. Had they been at home with the rest, it is more than probable that their fate had been the same with that of their friends." We believe, however, that besides this unusual visitation, the prevailing and continued mortality among the infants of a few days old, must be taken into consideration. For example, there has been no small-pox, nor other contagious disease in the island during recent years, and yet there has been almost no increase. Thus, Mr. Macdonald (author of the *Survey of the Hebrides*), found the population of St. Kilda in 1795 to amount to 87; Sir George Mackenzie, who visited the island about the beginning of the present cen-

tury, informs us it was then 97; in the year 1809 it was ascertained to be 103; Mr. Macdonald (of Urquhart), states it in 1822 to have reached 108, while, after a lapse of nearly twenty years, we ourselves found it (in 1841) 105.

Mr. Macaulay probably saw more of the women of St. Kilda than we did, and is therefore more competent to declare that "there are some of them, who, if properly dressed and genteelly educated, would in my opinion be reckoned extraordinary beauties in the gay world." The inconsiderate might conclude that a few hard worked and illiterate men, dwellers no doubt in a sublime yet wild and barren region, with few appliances or means to boot, would be by no means assiduous in cultivating the divine art of poetry. But those who remember that illustrious bards emerged from the fogs of Bæotia, or were bred among the mountains of Thrace, (to say nothing of the car-borne Ossian on the hills of Morven), will the more readily admit that great poets are not like plants depending upon light and heat. "The subjects handled by the bards of St. Kilda in their odes, are the beauty and accomplishments of their favourites among the

fair sex, the heroic actions of their friends, their dexterity in climbing rocks, their superior skill in fishing, their extraordinary vigour, skill, and constancy while at the oar, besides the common topics of personal advantages and intellectual merit."

Mr. Macaulay, in his 13th chapter, enters into the extremely important enquiry as to "Whether St. Kilda be a place proper for a fishery?" It is obvious at the first glance at the island, that from the vast assemblage of sea-fowl which here nestle and bring up their young, feeding them upon the products of the ocean, that the surrounding waters must abound with fish. No doubt a bird's power of wing is great, and in the course of an hour or two these flying creatures may depart towards and return from a comparatively far country, bringing home a stock of provisions in the creel beneath their throat with which a benign and provident nature has supplied them. But millions of them fish in the surrounding sea, and the fishes themselves are often seen, and sometimes taken, in great quantities. "The coast of St. Kilda," says Martin, "and the lesser isles, are plentifully furnished with variety of cod, ling, mackerel, congars, braziers, turbot, greylords,

sythes; these last two are of the same kind, only differing in bigness; some call them black-mouths; they are as large as any salmon, and somewhat longer; there are also laiths, podloes, herrings, and many more; most of these are fished by the inhabitants upon the rock, for they have neither nets nor long lines." The quantity of fish required to supply the wants of so enormous an ornithological establishment as St. Kilda is in truth altogether incalculable. We know that sea-fowl are exceedingly voracious, that during the breeding season they toil all day without intermission, and that their favourite food, especially that of the solan goose, is herring and mackerel. Let us suppose that there are 200,000 solan geese in the colony of St. Kilda (we believe from what we saw, the computation moderate), and that each is a feeding creature there or thereabouts for seven months in the year. Let us also suppose that each devours (by itself or young) only five herrings a-day:—this amounts to one million. Seven months (March–September) contain 214 days by which to multiply the above, and render it 214 millions of fish for the summer sustenance of a single species. Think of this, ye men of Wick,

ye curers in Caithness, ye fair females of the salting tub! It is also a subject worthy of very grave consideration by all who take an interest in these forlorn St. Kildeans. A second boat would probably be of great advantage, and also a good supply of hooks and lines. "The rocks to which the people of this island have access with their angling rods, are only two, and these abundantly frightful to any other race of mortals. On each of them are ten sitting places, so they call the craggy declivities, where they plant themselves while at fishing; and on every one of these two men make a shift to stand or sit."

We shall here close our account of Mr. Macaulay's work with a quotation from his own concluding passage. "Silver and gold, stately houses and costly furniture, together with the fantastic luxury of dress, and the table, they neither have nor desire. To rise in fleets and armies amidst infinite toils and dangers: to earn posts or pensions, after having wriggled themselves into the favour of the great, at the expense of honour and conscience: to create overgrown estates, after having practised all the vile arts of avarice, frauds, extortion, and servility, are passions and

wishes, which providence has kindly concealed from them. The humble blessings of bread and wild-fowl, of peaceful cottages and little flocks, of angling rods and hunting ropes, are all the riches, honours, and profits they aspire after. If at a distance from the seats of justice, they are absolute strangers to the law's delays. If ignorant and unphilosophical, they are libertines neither in belief or practice; nor with learned speculations strike at the foundation of virtue, nor produce any breach of the public tranquillity or happiness."*

At a period intermediate between the visitations of Martin and Macaulay, St. Kilda enjoyed the spiritual consolations of the Rev. Alexander Buchan, who officiated in the character of a catechist there in the reign of Queen Anne. He was afterwards licensed, and at the desire of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge was ordained minister, and sent in that capacity to St. Kilda in the year 1705. He was the first to introduce the use of letters, and resided among his people for twenty-four years, until his death.

* *History of St. Kilda*, p. 275.

He died of fever about the commencement of the year 1730, and his work was not published till long after his decease.* "He had thirteen children," says his daughter Jean, "many of them being now dead, and I the second daughter was sent from St. Kilda to the schools in Glasgow for my education, and was shipwrecked upon the Mull of Cantyre, when I was about fifteen years of age; yet I went to Glasgow for my education, where I continued for some time; from thence I went to Edinburgh where I had the misfortune to be beat by a horse on the street, and broke my jaw-bone, which has rendered me uncapable of earning my bread by the needle, to which I was brought up. I had also another misfortune to get my arm broke, and not being carefully set, is mighty uneasy to me." Although Miss Jean informs us that her father's work was "gathered partly by good informations, and partly by his own observations, we are sorry to say that it is taken almost entirely, and in many parts verba-

* *A Description of St. Kilda.* By the Rev. Mr. Alexander Buchan, late minister there. The edition in our hands was printed in 1773, with a preface by his daughter.

tim, from Martin's volume, a fact which, had we lived about the middle of last century, we should not have mentioned to the public, lest it should have made his daughter " mighty uneasy." Mr. Buchan has however added a few notices of interest, chiefly regarding the effect which a visit to the great commercial world of Glasgow produced upon the mind of a St. Kildean. He was astonished at the length of the voyage, and the many great kingdoms, that is islands, which he sailed along. " Upon his arrival at Glasgow he was like one that dropped from the clouds into a new world, whose language, habit, &c. were in all respects new to him; he never imagined that such big houses of stone were made with hands; and for the pavements of the streets, he thought it must needs be altogether natural, for he could not believe that men would be at pains to beat stones into the ground to walk upon. He stood dumb at the door of his lodging with the greatest admiration, and when he saw a coach and two horses, he thought it to be a little house that they were drawing at their tail, with men in it; but he condemned the coachman for a fool to sit so uneasy, for he thought it safer on the back of one of the

horses." "When he went through the streets, he desired to have one to lead him by the hand. Thomas Ross, a merchant, and others that took the diversion to carry him through the town, asked his opinion of the High Church? He answered that it was a large rock; that there were some in St. Kilda much higher, but that these were the best coves he ever saw; for that was the idea he conceived of the pillars and arches upon which the church stands. When they carried him into the church, he was yet more surprised, and held up his hands with admiration, wondering how it was possible for men to build such a prodigious fabric, which he supposed to be the largest in the universe." "He did not think there had been so many people in the world, as in the city of Glasgow; and it was a great mystery to him to think what they could all design by living so many in one place. He wondered how they could all be furnished with provisions; and when he saw big loaves, he could not tell whether they were bread, stone, or wood. He was amazed to think how they could be provided with ale, for he never saw any there that drank water, (they have no ale, beer, nor other liquors in St. Kilda)." "When

he observed horses with shoes on their feet, and fastened with iron nails, he could not forbear laughing, and thought it the most ridiculous thing that fell under his observation. He longed to see his native country again, and passionately wished it were blessed with ale, brandy, and tobacco (of which last they are great lovers), and iron, as Glasgow was." There is nothing else in Mr. Buchan's book.

Let us resume once more our personal discourse. As night was now closing in, and we had nothing more to see, we turned our prow again towards

the Lewis, bidding unwillingly "a long farewell" to wild St. Kilda, and the wondrous rocks and stacks by which it is surrounded.*

* In our ornithological memoranda we neglected to state that during our stay at St. Kilda, a black-tailed solan goose was mentioned to us as being occasionally seen intermingled with the other and more common kind. We at first regarded this as an accidental variety, but we have since recalled to mind that there is a distinct species described by naturalists under the title of *Pelecanus melanurus*, so called from the character in question. We believe this is the first ascertained instance of its occurrence in any of the British Islands.

CHAPTER III.

THE FLANNEN ISLES, OR SEAFORTH'S HUNTERS—WESTERN SHORES OF LEWIS—BAY OF UIG—HARBOUR OF CAIRNISH—BUTT OF LEWIS—HARBOUR OF CALLICOTT—THE MINCH—SUTHERLANDSHIRE AGAIN—CAPE WRATH—LOCH ERIBOL—RIVER HOPE—PARISH OF DURNESS—SCENERY OF THE NORTHERN COASTS—KYLE OF TONGUE—THURSO BAY—THURSO AND ITS VICINITY—SKYLARK BRIG—CAITHNESS IN GENERAL—DUNNET HEAD—PENTLAND FIRTH—JOHN O' GROAT'S—REGULATION ANENT ELDERS OF THE KIRK—EASTERN COAST OF CAITHNESS—BAY OF WICK.

We ran rather northwards of our course throughout the night, that we might have a peep *en passant* of the Flannen Isles, commonly called Seaforth's Hunters, a low grey coloured group, not deficient in pasture, and therefore maintaining a few sheep, though destitute, we believe, of human inhabitants. The ruins of some religious houses, however, attest their occupation in former times, and illustrate what has been called that "pertinacity of devotion," exercised by the Culdean and Romish clergy, and which induced them to settle in the remotest isles of the most barren

regions. The buildings in question were dedicated to St. Flann, a patron saint said to have flourished in the ninth century. Some regard them as Druidical, and therefore of more ancient date. These small islands are the *Insulæ Sacræ* of Buchanan.

By daylight in the morning of the 4th of August we bent our course somewhat south-eastwards, to visit the harbour of Cairnish, erected by the Fishery Board, in the Bay of Uig, or Loch Balnakyle, on the western shore of the Lewis. The breeze being fresh, and blowing in shore, it was thought unadvisable to take the Cutter farther than the mouth of the bay, so we proceeded inwards in the row-boat. Though the day was clear and bright, the country around, even under that advantage, seemed very barren and deserted. There is little to describe about it. The kirk of Uig was in sight on the opposite side of a sandy bay. Some high and almost herbless mountains formed the background, not a tree was visible, and even the common grassy vegetation along the immediate shores appeared to be so blighted or greatly injured by the influence of the salt-sea foam, that "all was barrenness." There are some

rocky islands towards the head of the bay, and beyond these the water shallows, and leaves a great expanse of sand bare at ebb-tide. The harbour is within a rocky point on the south side. It seemed a good piece of work, though the shoeing of the end of the pier is giving way. There was not a single boat within it (or indeed any where in sight) at this time, but as the arrival of some herrings in the neighbourhood had been reported, various boats were expected immediately, —probably about twenty-five throughout the season. The Secretary seemed to think that this harbour was placed rather too far up from the coast. Another disadvantage arises from the quantity of light shell-sand thrown over the pier by the surges that rise through the ravine between the two rocks, and an accumulation to the depth of six or seven feet has already taken place within. This might probably be counteracted by a flood-gate at a particular point, so placed as to scour away the sand. The pier would require to be extended at the same time nearly as far again, to the termination of the rocks.

Since the failure of the herring-fishery in Loch Roag, some miles northwards, the people of Uig

parish have been less on the alert, and worse prepared for that productive occupation, than of old. We have no doubt that herrings occur along these coasts in considerable quantities for a month or two every season, but few of the people are sufficiently provided with boats and nets to take advantage of that bounty of Providence, and the coast is very iron-bound and unprotected. However a good deal is done in the way of cod and ling fishing, and about 100,000 lobsters are annually exported to the London market. Salmon occur in several of the streams. Women were busy along shore gathering periwinkles from the rocks.

After joining the Cutter we had to beat all day northwards against a head-wind. We had a good view into Loch Roag or Bernera, with its multiplicity of islands. The wind fell towards evening, and the northern sky assumed a most crystalline clearness, so pure and bright that we almost expected to descry the snowy summits of some far arctic mountains. Along shore the land was bleak and bare, but to the left some fine effects were produced by a brilliant sunset among castellated clouds which overhung the western horizon. Just

as the sun was touching the ocean's brim, a large ship in full sail for America seemed to centre herself in the very heart of that bright effulgence. We almost wondered that she was not consumed. These manifold splendours of sea and sky were however regarded by the initiated as betokening a change of weather to the worse, and accordingly throughout the night we had a tempestuous head-wind, and a fearful swelling sea by the time we gained the Butt of Lewis.

5th August.—The morning was so stormy and the sea so high, that it was deemed hazardous to lower a boat from the Cutter, although the Secretary desired to go ashore to visit the Fishery Board harbour of Callicott. The weather ere long moderated in some degree, and a fishing boat coming within hail, the services of her crew were secured for the trip ashore. She was a rather ricketty concern, low in the gunwale, and not well managed by those on board, but after a few hours she brought the Secretary on board again in safety, after a most disagreeable tossing. He found the harbour about a mile south-east of the Butt, in a well-sheltered nook considering the extremely exposed nature of the general line of coast. As the

boat reached the shore, a great flock of gulls, and no less than nine ravens, flew up from some garbage of fish, deposited on the strand. The harbour was found to be well constructed, and had about a dozen of boats lying within its shelter. There is also a nice slip, on which in stormy weather boats can be drawn quite up upon the quay. The chief thing wanted is the cutting away a little more rock at the mouth, which is too narrow, and where lives have been lost in consequence. Raising the storm wall a few feet would be likewise an advantage. There is a road of approach to the harbour, and a considerable extent of curing-houses, some of which were occupied by those engaged in curing ling. Farther on was a kraal of the most miserable houses ever seen, resembling those of Barra in external form, but infinitely worse. The St. Kilda huts in comparison to these were palaces. The first object which met the eye (and nose and feet) within the threshold was a dunghill, from which the visitor has the option of descending either by the right hand into the cow's apartment, or by the left into that tenanted by human beings. Yet many of these

people were making handsomely by fishing. A good deal of cultivation prevailed around.

The general aspect of the parish of Barvas, which composes this most northern part of Lewis, is low, bleak, and mossy. Although portions of the coast are bold and rocky, the interior country rises to no considerable height, and the prevailing surface is flattish moorland, with a belt of reclaimed land along shore. The four-footed game are hares and red-deer. Grouse are pretty numerous. Wild swans and various kinds of ducks and geese occur. Among the feathered natives the minister names the crane,—*Ardea grus.* We presume he means the heron,—*Ardea cinerea*,—the crane not being a British bird. "The luminous meteors, rainbow, halo, and aurora-borealis or polar lights, are very frequent and brilliant. The glare of the latter sometimes may afford light for reading, and their warlike motions are often interesting. As they advance, at their first appearance slowly and majestically, the fertile imagination may fancy the cool and stately motions of two mighty hosts approaching to the onset, then the hurry and confusion of the thickening fight, then the rout, the

fugitive and pursuer emerging in one another until a third party shoots forth as from an ambuscade ending the battle, and resigning the firmament to the stars and ancient night."* There is not a tree in the parish.

The weather continued wet and stormy all day, and the wind right a-head, but the Princess Royal made a splendid stretch across the Minch towards the mouth of Loch Inver. We then beat up northwards along the coast of Sutherland, our object being to weather Cape Wrath. Both sea and sky exhibited a very ugly aspect, and we entertained no great hope of accomplishing our object, with either speed or pleasure.

6th August.—A stormy night, with a heavy sea, the Cutter pitching bows under, doors slamming themselves off their very hinges, chairs charging each other, glasses jingling, the cabin floor covered with books and biscuits, and our multifarious garments in dreadful disarray. A pair of inexpressibles were seen to rise of their own accord, like a flying angel through the morning twilight, and after hovering for a mo-

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xii., p. 142.

ment over the deck, they disappeared for ever. We beat off and on all day somewhere between Cape Wrath and the "Stack and Skerry," but the mists fell around us so dense and heavy, that we could distinguish neither sea nor shore. Our object would otherwise have been to keep as near the shore as possible, but the wind was so variable, and the rolling swell so high, that we feared running too near, with the risk of tides or currents carrying us right upon the rocky shore. Suddenly the wind died away almost to a calm, and we had the pleasant prospect of lying out all night off that iron-bound coast, without knowing where the current might drift us. We lay thus for a time, encompassed by the mist, in worse than heathen ignorance; till, fortunately, the air around us cleared away sufficiently to give us a view of Cape Wrath, and other points, from which to take our bearings. We were at this time a little to the north-east of that Cape, with the safe and far receding harbour of Loch Eribol opening before us southwards, and a light wind soon springing up in our favour, we gladly sought that sheltering haven, and speedily cast anchor above the Ferry Point.

Foreseeing on the morning of the 7th that the vessel would be detained all day in Loch Eribol (it being necessary to take in a stock of water), we were tempted by the near neighbourhood of Loch Hope, from which runs a short and rapid river to the sea, to cross over an intermediate hilly range, and try a few hours' angling. We took with us a grilse rod, a borrowed one (our accommodating friend Dr. Greville's), and soon suffered from our carelessness in not previously unrolling the reel-line, to see that all was in running order, and then rolling it up again tight and free. We soon reached the river Hope, and commenced operations about forty yards below the Boat-bridge Ferry. Our object in the first place was to kill a few sea-trout, so we began with rather lightish tackle and a couple of flies, one of them being a full-sized Irish tempter of gaudy hue,

"From Heaven's blue arch purloin'd,"

with a flashing sunset streak of golden pheasant. We had scarcely taken more than a couple of casts when up rose a fine fresh-run grilse of eight or nine pounds. He hooked himself very firmly, and after making a short and rapid run, stood

stock still. On looking at our reel, we found it was not likely to let out freely more than another yard of line. It had been too loosely put up before, was soft and open in the central warps, so that the running portion, instead of turning the cylinder, merely buried itself in a tightening grasp of what lay carelessly coiled beneath. We tried to anticipate a sudden run, by working out a few yards of the reel-line with our fingers, and rolling it up again in part in better order, holding the rest ready in hand; but knowing how little that would avail so soon as salmo chose to take his own sweet will either up or down the river, we warned those about us not to expect to dine upon him on the present occasion, as we had little hope of being able to withstand his first movement. However, he behaved very considerately for some time, giving us every opportunity to arrange our affairs; but at last he tired of standing still doing nothing, and took his way with a slow, steady, and deliberate movement, across the river. Of course he had no sooner run out our small portion of available line, and felt the check upon his onward progress, than he gave an angry and indignant plunge,

turning himself half round to see what was the matter, and showing a side lustrous as the purest silver. We were obliged to hold on, though the reel would not run another inch,—the upper link of gut almost instantly gave way, so we lost our fish, a brace of Campbell of Islay's best flies, and an excellent casting line,—every thing, in short, except our temper, which we don't wish to part with, in case we don't find another equally good. We remained by that part of the river for some time without raising another fish, but the one we had so unsuccessfully hooked speedily began to take tremendous springs above the surface, so that we could distinctly see our tackle hanging from his chops in a way that made our own water. We fear he was suffering from toothache, but consoled ourselves with the notion that we had enabled him to carry a line to the doctor. We lost no more tackle this day, but soon hooked another fine fish below the cruives, which after a few minutes gamboling (playful rogue), threw our hook out of his mouth, as if he disliked the taste of cold steel. We thought at the time that this was quite unnecessary, but every fish has its

fancy. We ended by killing a good dish of sea-trout, near the mouth of the river.

In the course of the day we encountered a boy and his tutor, the former a son of Mr. Clark of Eribol. They had a couple of rods, but their other angling gear was reduced to only a single fly between them. So we supplied them with a few long toms, yellow professors, &c. which filled their young hearts with joy. Before crossing the country towards the Cutter, we called upon an old acquaintance at the Ferry-house, a widow woman (as she was on our former visit), who worked the chain of the Boat-bridge. We found she had taken a help-mate. They apologized for having no spirits in the house (a practice which, though cold and wet from wading, we sincerely lauded), but gave us milk of the sweetest, and barley scones. The Secretary had been writing all day in the cabin, but walked out to meet us in the afternoon. He was much delighted by the view up the Lake from the pont-volant, receding as it did behind craggy points, with a fair sprinkling of silver-stemmed birch trees, and backed by the fine form of the huge Ben-Hope,

one of the loftiest of the mountains of Sutherland. The fishery officer, who had been sent for from Tongue, met us at this place, and we all returned together to the Princess Royal.

Sunday the 8th was fair and bright, as Sundays often are, making the day in every sense a blessing. Fine weather at such a time must be peculiarly grateful in Highland countries, where parishes are so much too extensive, and the distance of many families from church so great, and to hard working people there is something very refreshing in the clear tranquillity of the day of rest from worldly toil.

> "For them each evening hath its glittering stars,
> And every Sabbath-day its golden sun."

We were not ourselves on this occasion within reach of church, but we spent the earlier portion of the day as quietly as we could on board the Cutter. The scene from deck presented many striking features. The far-stretching waters of Loch Eribol lay around us calm and bright, the blue sky was opening its vast recesses over-head, while long wreaths of snowy clouds still rested on the sides and summits of all the neighbouring mountains. The air was so still, that we could

hear the bleating of the flocks among the upland pastures, while now and then "in symphony austere," the deep croaking of the raven came upon us from the more precipitous crags. Even the inky moors, which scarcely

"Feel, in their barrenness, one touch of spring,"

were sparkling through the summer air, their sable sides being coursed over by little silvery torrents, all seeking their final bourne in the insatiate sea.

Loch Eribol is placed in the parish of Durness, which includes Cape Wrath, and other north-western parts of Sutherland. Durness formerly comprehended the whole of Lord Reay's country, called in Gaelic *Duthaich Mhic Aoi*, that is, the land of the Mackays, and was supposed at that time to extend to about 800 square miles. The restricted parish contains some smaller lakes, besides Loch Hope, and Loch Borley, in particular, is well stocked with char. The only salmon stream of any importance after the river Hope, is the Grudy, or Dinard, which rises from Loch Dinard, and empties itself, after a run of ten miles, into the upper portion of the Kyle of Durness. The following columns show the amount of salmon and

grilse taken in these two rivers for a couple of years preceding one of our angling excursions into the country:—

	lbs. Salmon.	lbs. Grilse.	Rivers.
1832,	624,	1946,	Dinard.
1833,	181,	887,	
1832,	1488,	4650,	Hope.
1833,	2166,	7895,	

The herring fishery is carried on at two periods of the year. What is called the early fishing commences in June, during which month the fish are so rich that they are cured with difficulty, and the greater proportion is sent off to market weekly. The late fishing is carried on from about the middle of July till September. Mr. Findlater informs us that a smaller but superior species of herring is found occasionally in Loch Eribol, but is chiefly used for home consumption. He probably uses the term *species* in a less determinate sense than that bestowed on it by naturalists.* The lobster is here a crustacean of con-

* We observe that the clergyman in his account of Durness also enumerates the crane (*Ardea grus*) among the ornithologi-

siderable importance. It is fished for from May till August. The creel nets are cast into the sea within a few yards of the shore, baited with a piece of sethe or herring, and are lifted almost every half-hour from sunset to sunrise. The large claws are closed with strong pack-thread to prevent contention among brethren; each morning's capture is placed in a perforated chest, floating in the sea; and once a week the contents (or rather mal-contents) are moved into welled smacks, which carry them off to London. The Southrons get them here for 3d. a-piece, and from six to eight thousand are sent every summer from the Durness shores alone. The outer sea-fishing

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cal features of the parish, meaning we presume the heron. He likewise mentions the great auk (*Alca impennis*) as a native species. This is one of the rarest and most remarkable of British birds, being scarcely recorded as occurring elsewhere than as a straggler (from Iceland) off St. Kilda, and in Papa Westra, one of the Orkney Islands. We think it may be safely taken for granted that Mr. Findlater intends to intimate the occurrence not of the great auk, but of the great northern diver, *Colymbus glacialis*, which we have ourselves seen in the Bay of Balnakiel.

is less attended to than it deserves, as nobody doubts the abundant occurrence of both cod and ling at no great distance from the coast.

As the wind was now fair for taking us out of the somewhat narrow reaches of Loch Eribol, we weighed anchor for Thurso, and on clearing the mouth of the Loch enjoyed a fine view of many bold headlands:—to the left, Far-out-Head, with Cape Wrath surmounted by its lofty light-house in the distance,—to the right the Whiten-Head, with its deep caverns, and spiral stacks,—while inland Ben Hope and other adjacent mountains upraised their lofty forms. The breeze failed us soon, but notwithstanding we closed rapidly with a fleet of schooners which were previously about eight miles a-head. When off the long narrow firth called the Kyle of Tongue, we enjoyed the formerly familiar view of the beautiful and extremely picturesque mountain or rather group of mountains named Ben Loyal.* They reminded us of the Langdale Pikes of Westmoreland, but

* We believe this word is Celtically spelled *Laoghal*, but we adopt a mode more consonant with its ordinary pronunciation.

there are four of these northern giants instead of two. "On a summer morning," says the minister, "or after a sweet summer shower, when the transparent mist is reposing on its bosom, or coiling among its peaks, the appearance of this hill is very beautiful, and often singularly fantastic."*

Although the Kyle of Tongue runs about ten miles inland it does not afford good anchorage, and its navigation is difficult owing to its want of depth, and the somewhat shifting nature of the sands. There is however good riding ground for vessels of any burden within the shelter of the Rabbit isles, at the mouth of the Kyle. The herring fishery in this district has greatly fallen

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* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 166. While residing for a few days at Tongue in the summer of 1834, the then incumbent of the parish was the Rev. William Mackenzie, a venerable old man, distinguished for the sanctity of his character, and highly esteemed for his spiritual services among the people, for whose good he had laboured uninterruptedly for the long period of sixty-five years. He was appointed in 1769, and died sometime after our visit in 1834, at the advanced age of ninty-six. He has been succeeded by his son, the Rev. Hugh Mackay Mackenzie.

off in recent years, as shown by the ensuing tabular view:—

Year.	No. of Boats.	Barrels Cured.	Average per Boat.
1833.	30.	3538.	118.
1835.	64.	6304.	98½.
1839.	68.	1425.	21.
1840.	68.	1233.	18.

The want of safe and commodious harbours along these northern shores is probably a disadvantage as tending to discourage the permanent settlement of active enterprising curers, without whose aid (though occasionally abused, or it may be tyrannically exercised) the poorer class of fishermen cannot bring their sometimes sole possessions, bodily strength and hardihood, into profitable exercise. Many of them, however, are in the pay of the Caithness curers, and are sometimes called on to proceed to Wick, even when herrings are swarming off their own shores. We observed a French fishing smack taking her course outwards from the Rabbit islands. With these foreign vessels the actual fishing is rather pretence than reality. *They generally purchase from our people*, but are obliged (in consequence of certain regulations by their own government) to bring the

produce home as if captured by themselves.* Although admirable roads have now been formed in almost all directions through the country, there is here no steady market nor means of conveyance for any kind of white fish, of which numerous species, such as haddock, whiting, cod, ling, flounder and skate, occur along the coast, as well as (though these in smaller numbers) tusk and turbot. The only salmon stream in Tongue parish worth noting is the Borgie. It rises from Loch Slam, the lowest of a chain of lakes to the eastward of Ben Loyal, and falls into the sea on the western side of Torriedale Bay. It yields on an average about 2000 fish annually. The lakes themselves are well stocked with trout, and both char and *salmo ferox* occur in Loch Loyal. There is an excellent inn at Kirkaboll, above Tongue Ferry, where a lover of the picturesque may take up his quarters for a few fine days, with great satisfaction both of mind and body.

* Although the French fishing vessels, in accordance with the terms of a recent treaty, are debarred from approaching (for the purposes of their craft) within three miles of the British shores, any enforcement of this boundary law must, for the reasons above stated, be executed with prudence and discretion.

Gliding slowly along shore we passed Strathy Head and other points in the parish of Farr, through the centre of which runs the fine pastoral valley of Strathnaver, adorned in its upper portion by Loch Naver, and the huge Ben Klibreck, the second highest mountain in Sutherland.* Towards the evening of this day, the Orkney Islands came distinctly into view, especially the Old Man of Hoy (a peculiar pillar-like projecting rock), and the mountainous island of the same name, close to which he uprears his weather-beaten brow. The sunset was glorious over the smooth broad mirror of the western sea, producing with the dark intercepting sails of the schooners, now far astern, one of the finest Claude-like pictures ever seen. Night fell before we reached Thurso Bay, so we retired to rest, and found ourselves snugly at anchor in Scrabster roads of that bay when we awoke in the morning.

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* The following are the altitudes of eight of the highest mountains of this northern county :—

Ben More, in Assynt,	3431.	Ben Hee, .	2854.
Ben Klibreck, .	3164	Ben Spionue,	2566.
Ben Hope, . .	3060.	Ben Armin, .	2306.
Fionaven, .	3015.	Ben Griam-More,	1935.

At an early hour of Monday the 9th, we received our various home despatches by the hands of the fishery officer, who came on board to breakfast, and were afterwards employed for most of the day in writing our notes and letters. We went ashore with the Secretary for an hour or two before dinner, and walked through Thurso, which is a lengthened irregular kind of town, with many strong substantial looking houses, built upon no very definite plan as to street arrangement, and by no means tidily kept externally, whatever may be the interior order, of which we cannot judge. Thurso Castle, the ancestral dwelling of Sir George Sinclair, the principal proprietor in this quarter, rises from the shore and almost from the water's edge, to the east of the mouth of the river Thurso. It seems to have been enlarged in recent times and though the additions are in good taste, the immediate grounds are too flat and treeless to combine with the mass of building in such a manner as to produce either an imposing or a picturesque effect. In the distance is seen "Harold's Tower," a kind of monumental building, erected by the late Sir John Sinclair over the supposed grave of Earl Harold, slain in battle

about the close of the twelfth century. We took a peep at the ruins of an old Gothic church while passing through the town. The tower seemed of ancient architecture, and extremely plain. One tolerable window still remains with its mullions entire. Within is the burial-place of the Caithness family, and there is a curious old monument in the crypt beneath the tower. We also took a look at the river, and sighed to see it so clear and low. It was recorded many years ago by Sir John Sinclair that 2560 salmon were taken in one day from a pool of this river. There is a closed cruive higher up, which stretches quite across the stream, and must prevent the breeding fish from ascending to the proper spawning beds in due season, and so by checking the increase of parr, must prove eventually injurious to the race of grilse and salmon. The fisheries of this species in Thurso parish rent for about £1000 per annum, besides which the captures of herring, haddock, cod, and lobsters, are important.

Instead of returning to the Cutter by the boat across the bay, we walked along the western semicircular shore, and were picked up as soon as we came nearly opposite the position where our vessel

lay at anchor. We passed on our way the ruins of Scrabster Castle, once the residence of the Bishops of Caithness. Farther onwards on the top of a bank in the western corner of the bay, stood a villa well imagined in its architecture, with a hanging garden, and a few trees trying to struggle against the blasts. Lieutenant Wright, of the Sky-Lark (a small brig of war sent down by the Admiralty to aid in attending to the general interests of the fisheries along the coasts), and his officers joined us at dinner, accompanied by Mr. Chayter, an amateur angler of great experience, and extensive practice in the divine art. The latter astonished one of our tee-total friends by declaring that while in Parliament for some years as member for North Durham, he always *stood up* for the cause of gin-palaces, and the interests of the spirit-dealers. After the departure of our guests we sat on deck for an hour, enjoying the splendour of a waveless sea and cloudless summer sky, with a lovely crescent moon, and countless stars sparkling like living light.

On the forenoon of Tuesday the 10th (the Secretary being still occupied by business) we accepted an invitation from Lieutenant Wright

to go on board the Sky-Lark, and witness a few rounds of ball practice with the brig's brass guns, furnished with Miller's sights. An old barrel, with a small flag and staff stuck into its upper portion, was anchored about 700 yards from the Sky-Lark, and a few nine-pound shot discharged at the same. Had the barrel been a small vessel or even a boat, it would have been knocked to pieces immediately, as every shot must have told. As it was, the flag was pierced. We tried a shot ourselves, though not much addicted to warlike exercises. We were quite in the straight line, but our ball struck a little short of the barrel, and then leaped over it, dancing its recoches on the other side, and making what boys call "ducks and drakes" till the wearisome principle of gravitation dragged it down into the bosom of the deep. These guns are fired by means of a long cord with which you (if our reader is a lady we beg her pardon) pull a lock so soon as, by giving directions to two assistant sailors with long wooden staves, one standing on each side of the breech, you find on laying your eye along the points of sight, that the muzzle of the gun is as nearly as possible in line with the object aimed at. This ensures your

not firing too much to right or left, but then the heaving of the vessel up and down, produces another kind of motion which can only be counteracted by a practised quickness of eye and hand. When you lay your eye along the line of the gun, you probably find its muzzle (from the motion of the vessel) rising and falling, and alternately showing and concealing the enemy, that is the flag and barrel. If you prefer to take the upward motion of the muzzle, then you must fire a second or two before the barrel is about to be hidden from view,—if you prefer the downward motion (the hostile barrel being at this time invisible) then you must fire the moment the top of the flag-staff appears in sight. In the former case, if you fire too soon, the ball falls short of the object,—in the latter, should you commit the same fault, the ball falls over and beyond it. But there must be no wavering or delay in your choice (especially in *action*) otherwise by the swinging or horizontal motion of the vessel the gun gets out of the line either to right or left, and must be brought to bear again by directions to the sailors with the heavy spokes. Most people, we believe, prefer taking the shot when the gun is descending,

though we ourselves chose the upward movement. We think we would make a rather good gunner, —especially in time of peace. But to see a barrel in the form of a seventy-four, with a double tier of guns, all full of fire and fury, and roaring away at yourself in return, would greatly alter the aspect of affairs. Even as it was, we felt a single palpitation of the heart, just as we pulled the string, something similar to what one experiences in angling in a rocky river, when a strong-finned unexpected salmon rises to your insidious lure from the very centre of a rushing stream, and when you fancy for a moment that the resounding voice of the entire river is occasioned by his glittering lounge. While on board the Sky-Lark we could not help admiring the fine young gallant-looking English sailors, with their sweet-toned speech, their trig attire, and waving ringlets. Though much attached to our own steady and sagacious crew, the *élite* of Rothsay, and the shores of Clyde, it must be admitted that these fair-haired southern sons of Neptune threw us all into the shade.

Our anchorage in Scrabster roads was a pleasant station so far as concerned the fresh and open

sunny bay, with its low green boundaries, extremely fertile when compared with many quarters we had lately seen. But almost the entire county of Caithness presents an uninteresting aspect (at least in a pictorial point of view) from its extreme flatness, and almost total want of trees. The land is, we believe, very productive, and much improved in *arability* in recent years; yet while it wants on the one hand the rich and varied culture of the south country Lowlands, it possesses no portion of the picturesque grandeur of the Highlands.

Had our time permitted we should have desired an inspection of Mr. Traill of Ratter's slate-quarries at Castle-hill in the neighbouring parish of Olrick. These pavement stones are so plain and regular in their stratification, as to require little or no surface dressing. The layers vary in the quarry from three-fourths of an inch to five inches and upwards. The colour ranges from smoke-grey to blue, the texture hard and very durable. Polished portions are now prepared for lobby floors, table slabs, hearth stones, chimney pieces, and other interior ornamental purposes. Upwards of 100 labourers are employed in preparing cargoes for export; a commodious harbour has been erect-

ed by the proprietor; from 3000 to 4000 tonnage is required for the shipments; and from 300,000 to 400,000 square feet of pavement are disposed of every year.* Mr. Traill is also recognised as the principal agricultural improver of the county of Caithness. In regard to live stock he has formed a cross between the Highland cattle and the Tees-water, which is found to answer well. He introduced the Leicester sheep about ten years ago, and they are found to have succeeded remarkably both as to weight and quality of wool. Of trees planted above fifty years ago on the estate of Castle-hill, the ash is said to be the most thriving. Firs are unsuccessful.

The 11th of August was ushered in by a beautiful morning, and a light wind from the north-west. Both Brig and Cutter got under weigh at an early hour, to proceed in company to Wick. We do not know whether the trial of the rates of sailing was a fair one between vessels of such different rig, but sure it is that we soon shot out of the bay, and left the brig behind us. We ere long passed Dunnet Head, the most northerly

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 60.

point of Scotland, and then entered the formidable Pentland Firth, keeping outside the island of Stroma. The Orkney coasts were distinct and clear to the northwards, with Hoy Head, and the upright old gentleman before alluded to. The Pentland Firth is remarkable for the strength and rapidity of its currents, which render its navigation dangerous without an experienced pilot, and often difficult even with that advantage. These tidal currents, while we passed through, were running with us, otherwise we would have made but little way. The boiling, and streaming, and bulging up, with here and there a comparatively smooth expanse, and then a rush as of a raging river, exemplified the power of waters. However we got through it much better than our late companion the Sky-Lark, for we could see through our glasses that she was fairly wheeled about by some counter-current of the tide, and probably finding that the set was towards the Orkney Islands, she ere long put out a couple of boats a-head, and had herself towed for a time in the right direction.

From Dunnet Head to Duncansbay Head, both of which are lofty and precipitous, the country

seemed comparatively low and level. On rounding the latter point we took our course due southwards, getting speedily within sight of John o' Groat's Stacks,—tall, insulated, spire-like rocks, much frequented by various sea-fowl, and one of them an eagle's eyrie. Like other rocks of a similar nature, they seem to change their aspect and character in an almost magical manner, according to the point from which they are viewed, and from our position we observed them grouped together so as to form as it were an immense Castle. At other times they rather represented the shattered remnants of some ancient Gothic building. This north-eastern portion of Scotland forms the parish of Cannisbay, in the ecclesiastical records of which there is the following regulation, of date 27th December 1652. We have it in our note-book as a useful memorandum:—"Item, ordained yt if ane elder or other paroshiner be fund drinking in ane ailhouse on the Sabbath-day, or extraordinarily on the week-day, who bees notted to faill, sall pay 40d. for the first falt, and mak publick confession before the congregation, with certification if any be fund to fall therein

again, they sall undergoe higher censure, *especially an elder.*"

There is a good take of lobsters off these shores, for the London market. About thirty large boats, of about ten ton each, and a crew of five men, employed in the herring fishery, belong to the people of the parish of Cannisbay. We are informed that the value of one of these boats, with a full complement of nets, amounts to nearly £100, while the average annual return to each crew ranges from £50 to £60. They generally however leave their own coast for the more immediate neighbourhood of Wick, and other southern stations, proceeding there about the middle of July, and continuing in good seasons about a couple of months. Scarcely any kelp is now manufactured on these northern shores.

From Duncansbay Head we took our course due southwards. The bolder features of the coast decline into low land within and around the Bay of Freswick. We were signalised from the telegraph of the Preventive Service Station there, and showed our number in reply. The ruins of old Bucholie Castle stand upon Freswick point, and close upon the shore. Further onwards, the

wide, open, semicircular sweep, called Sinclair's Bay, expanded before us its low flat sandy shores, more rocky and abrupt towards its southern horn, and dignified by the remains of several ancient castles. We next neared Noss Head, and ere long cast anchor in the Bay of Wick. By this time of course the day was far spent, and the evening at hand, but we had still a novel and spirit-stirring sight before us in the vast and streaming flow of herring boats, sail after sail in long continuous lines, emerging from the inner portion of the bay towards the open sea. These are fine crafts, very strong and sea-worthy, with great power of endurance, and each carrying a crew (for the most part) of six men.

The coast of the Wick district, which extends for about twenty-six miles, is the greatest resort, for the purposes of the herring fishery, of any place in Britain. It is probable that this invaluable species abounded off these northern shores even in the most ancient periods, although it does not appear that net-fishing prevailed before the beginning of last century. For sixty or eighty years the business seemed to have been conducted without much enterprise or activity, the boats

seldom venturing more than a mile or two from shore, and being consequently often unsuccessful when myriads of fish were swarming farther out. A good deal was done by the British Society for the extension of the fisheries, &c. incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1786. The well-manned and finely built adventurous boats from the Firth of Forth began to make their way northwards, and following the practice of shooting their nets wherever they thought there was a chance of fish, although they should be ten or twelve miles from shore, the produce was much increased. For example, in 1782 only 363 barrels of white herrings were exported from Wick, while in 1790 the number was 10,514 barrels of white, and above 2000 of red herrings, besides about 700 barrels consumed within the country. Pulteneytown, which now forms by far the greater portion of the Parliamentary population of the burgh of Wick, was commenced by the "British Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts" in 1808. In the year following commissioners were appointed by Act of Parliament* for

* 48th Geo. III. cap. 110.

the encouragement and regulation of a branch of commerce of the highest importance in itself, and of inestimable value as a nursery for a bold and hardy race of sea-faring people. " Under improved methods of curing introduced by the Commissioners, and an additional bounty granted by Parliament in 1815, the fishery increased so rapidly that in 1824 the British Fishery Society commenced the construction of an outer harbour, which having been finished, rendered the port both safe and commodious. This measure consolidated the prosperity of the Wick herring fishery."* The bounty was withdrawn in 1830.

It is the belief of many people, that the failure of our west coast fishing is attributable to the migration of the great body of herrings eastward to the shores in question. This was the purport of Mr. Graham's evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons on Highland Emigration.† We don't think this fact at all established. The fisheries on the western coasts have decidedly declined, those on the eastern have as

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 152.

† *Report*, 24th May 1841.

clearly increased. But we know that at certain stations, and during particular times and seasons, the western fish are as abundant as ever, though apparently less regular in their shoreward movements;* and we likewise know that they continue to preserve, as of old, those distinctive attributes of size, quality, and condition which distinguish them from the eastern hordes, to say nothing of the difference in the times of spawning. The Caithness herrings are larger, coarser fish, and are seldom got in good condition after the end of August, whereas those of our western lochs continue to be caught in excellent order for several months beyond that time, although not unmingled with those which have suffered from the spawning process. Except then the inconsequential fact of the increase in the one case and the diminution in the other, nothing has been

* For example, the mass of herrings last year (1840) was so great in Loch Torridon, that they were thrown out of the sea by every stroke of the oars; and, on one occasion, when a gale of wind was blowing, the water was so covered by oleaginous matter from the numerous gutting stations on the shore, that the surface remained unruffled by the storm. When viewed from the hill side, the loch resembled a mercurial mirror.

brought forward to show that west country herrings leave their rich and sheltered shores, and encounter the perils of the Pentland Firth, to take up their abode along the exposed and unindented coasts of Caithness.

The Bay of Wick is quite open to the eastward, and affords no safe or protecting anchorage-ground for vessels of any size, unless when the wind is blowing off the land. The "British Society," before mentioned, commenced the establishment of Pulteneytown, by making a harbour for boats and shipping, in the year 1808. The bounties granted by Parliament,* and the great improvement in our modes of cure, so greatly increased the fisheries of this north-

* In the six years ending 5th April 1815, the bounty on herrings cured gutted was 2s. per barrel, while there was a bounty at the same time of 2s. 8d. per barrel, payable by the Excise on the exportation of herrings, whether cured gutted or ungutted, but which ceased on the 1st of June 1815. In the eleven years ending 5th April 1826, the bounty on herrings cured gutted was 4s. per barrel; in the four succeeding years the bounty was reduced 1s. per barrel each year till the 5th of April 1830, when it ceased altogether, and has not since been renewed.—See *Report by the Commissioners* (for year 1840), note to p. 15.

eastern district, that in 1824 the same Society commenced the construction of an outer harbour, which now renders the haven more commodious.

The wind was at this time nearly due west, so we cast anchor in the mouth of the Bay. We found that there were no fewer than 715 boats engaged this season in the Wick fishery, including such as had made their way from other distant shores. To us it appeared that of the whole fleet none were superior, and few equal, either in make or outfit, to those of our friends and neighbours from Newhaven, in the Firth of Forth.

CHAPTER IV.

WICK FISHERY—WICK—HERRING GUTTERY—FEMALE GUTTERS—PRODUCTIVE NATURE OF THE CAITHNESS FISHERY—ITS GOOD AND BAD EFFECTS—CASTLES SINCLAIR AND GIRNIGOE—THE GOOD OLD TIMES—ORNITHOLOGY OF CAITHNESS—HARBOUR OF KEISS—KEISS CASTLE—WATER OF WESTER—SINCLAIR'S BAY—SARCLET HARBOUR—LYBSTER—WHALLIGOE—PARISH OF LATHERON—ACKERGILL TOWER.

Deeming this the most favourable opportunity which could present itself of witnessing the actual fishery on the most extended scale, we retired early to rest, and were again on deck by about two in the morning of the 12th of August, having previously weighed anchor, and stood out to sea, so as to reach the region (from four to seven miles off shore), in which the boats were chiefly occupied. There is a good deal of what is arbitrary or accidental in the herring fishery, for while it not unfrequently happens that every boat obtains a share, at other times one crew may pull up their nets all alive with fish, and glittering like a sheet of silver,—a near neighbour re-

turning disconsolate and altogether empty. According to the fishery laws, regulated by Act of Parliament, and enforced by that fearless Cutter, the Princess Royal, they dare not shoot their nets till after sunset, because although a few boats by so doing might make a speedy and productive capture, the great body of the herrings (as is alleged) might take alarm, and sinking down into the "blue profound," would thus escape the snares of all the other expectants. But by shooting their nets just before night-fall, the herrings in their nocturnal rambles do not detect the wily "suspension and interdict" which has been taken out against them, and is every where hanging around for their destruction in these their watery heavens. When a shoal thus meets a net under the obscure cover of the night, it cares little and fears less, and so pushing forwards, every fish with a view to get on in life (in the midst of which they are in death), presses his snout and head through a mesh an inch square, too small to admit his shoulders, but alas! also too small to permit the withdrawal of the thoughtless head, —for the sharp edge and opening action of the gill-covers present obstructions which the most

high-minded herring struggles in vain to overcome.

By the grey of the early twilight we found ourselves in the very thickest of the fight. Many crews were making large captures, hauling up their long-extended nets glittering with fish "as the dew of the morning," or, as one of our sailors expressed it, "going over the gunnel like *a white horse*." The surface of the sea seemed at this time dotted all over with small dark spots. These were the boats with their sails pulled down. As the nets are hauled they are also shaken, so as to cause all those fish that are loosely meshed to drop into the boat, the rest being disentangled when they reach the harbour. While the boats lay at anchor by their nets, they looked like motionless specks upon the water, and the effect was singular and very striking when they suddenly hoisted their canvass, as if emerging from the bosom of the deep, and shot away towards the shore, covering the now brightened surface far and near with a multitudinous array of sombre coloured sails. The same law regulates the morning as the evening fishery, and they are not allowed to cast again after sunrise. We then returned to Wick Bay,

and for an hour or two enjoyed the sight of the countless boats returning laden with their scaly treasures in much the same order as that in which we had seen them depart outwards the preceding evening.

After breakfast we went ashore to Wick, and there witnessed one of the most extraordinary sights we have seen for many a day. All along the inner harbour, and in every street and quay, as well as within many large enclosed yards and covered buildings, there are numerous square wooden boxes as big as ordinary sized rooms, the containing sides, however, being only two or three feet high. Into these huge troughs the herrings are carried in panniers from the boats the instant they arrive. There they are all tumbled in helter-skelter, pannier after pannier, in a long-continued stream of fish, until the boats are emptied or the troughs are filled. Then come troops of sturdy females, each armed with knife in hand, and range themselves around the trough, —the process of gutting commences, and is carried on with such ceaseless and untiring rapidity, that unless we had used the freedom to request one of the cleanest and prettiest of these eviscera-

trixes so to moderate the rancour of her knife as to let us see what she was doing, we could scarcely have followed her manipulations with the naked eye. However, we think we are now master, at least in theory, of the refined art of evisceration.* The Secretary and ourself had the curiosity to time our fair friend, when left to the remorseless rapidity of her own sweet will, and we found that she gutted exactly two dozen in the minute. Now two thousand women working at that rate with but brief intermission from early morning till the close of day, must produce an almost incalculable amount of disembowelment.†

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* This important process is effected in the following manner. The practitioner takes a herring in her left hand, its back lying in her palm, and inserts the point of her knife into the side of the neck. She then gives the instrument a turn, and pulling it out with an opposing pressure of the thumb, she draws forth in the first place the gills, stomach, and intestinal canal, and tosses them into their appropriate barrel. She then inserts the knife again, and by a second twitch removes what is called the crown gut (or cæcal appendages) and liver. There are thus two actions performed, each of which occupies about a second of time. We may add that in the Dutch mode of cure the crown gut is not removed.

† We are aware that the use of the term *guts* is unusual in works

They generally work together in little companies of two or three, so that while one is filling a basket with her gutted fish, another carries them off to be *roused*, as they call it, that is, cast into vats or barrels, then sprinkled with salt, then more herrings and more salt, then a brawny arm plunged among them far above the elbow, and the whole mingled together, and so on till the space is filled. They may lie a longer or shorter time in this state, according to the amount of labour in hand, and the immediate necessities of gutting and rousing; but the next usual step in the routine is for a third hand to remove those herrings from the first vats or barrels, and repack them more carefully, their under sides rather upwards, and every successive row crossing at right angles that which precedes it. They give each row a fresh sprinkling of salt, and then laying the head of the cask on loosely, they leave

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bearing any relation to the belles lettres. But we adopt it as a good old unaffected Saxon word, short and explicit in its nature, and more expressive of the meaning sought to be conveyed than any other. At the same time we take leave to apologise to the fastidious reader, who may either skip the present portion of our discourse, or wash his hands at the end of the chapter.

the contents to settle down for a day, which they do so considerably as to enable each cask to contain a few more rows before being finally closed by the cooper.

Though these gutters (not a few of them) are good-looking creatures, yet the appearance of the general mass after they have worked an hour or two, beggars all description. Their hands, their necks, their busts, their

> "Dreadful faces throng'd, and fiery arms,"

their every bit about them fore and aft, are spotted and besprinkled o'er with little scarlet clots of gills and guts, or as Southey says of the war-horse of Don Roderick, after the last and fatal fight,—

> "Their flanks incarnadined,
> Their poitral smear'd with blood."

Now many of these awful phenomena were really handsome. So if under such outward circumstances even a comely woman, one naturally fair to look upon, becomes a fearful creature, what imagination can conceive, without the visible and dread reality, into what depth of plainness that female object must descend, who in her own right a most "ugly customer," even on the morning of

a soap-abounding Sunday, has passed in week-day life through the ordeal of her order, and bloody and all-begrimmed with slime stands up with knif e in hand, or stoops her horrid head " with *scaly* armour bright," and plunging her bare and brawny arms again into the trough, scatters her gills and guts as if no bowels of compassion existed any more on this terraqueous globe. It is indeed a fearful sight, abhorred by gods and men, for we don't think that either Neptune or Asmodëus could have abided such fishy fumes. Yet strange to say many of these artists during after hours are the gayest belles about the place, for the occupation, while the season lasts, is extremely lucrative, and affords a temptation both to numerous females of the district, and to many more drawn thither from the remotest places of the Western Highlands by the hope of " filthy lucre."

Before beginning to work they take off their caps and bonnets, and either cover over or exchange their outer garment for a *worser*, making their toilet with innocent unreserve *sub Jove*, and so commence their bloody occupation. Towards evening they carefully wash their faces, arms,

and legs, and slip on again their better garment. Thus they never appear except around the gutting board in otherwise than rather trim array. Indeed many of the most magnificently fine females, whom we saw standing at respectable doors, or looking out of decent windows, or going sedately about their evening occupations from shop to shop, had been assiduously engaged in gutting all day long. The cure of herrings is indeed an object of such paramount importance to the town and neighbourhood, that when an unusual *take* occurs, and delicate female hands are wanting for the work, a kind of requisition is sent through the town, even to the most respectable inhabitants, to allow their domestics to attend as gutters for a day or two; and in hiring servants it is by no means unusual for the latter to stipulate for *leave to gut* during a certain number of days, as a perquisite beyond their usual termly wages. To prevent indolence or idleness all these gutters are paid by piece-work, that is, so much a cran or barrel after the fish are packed. At the rate of 4d. per barrel, each gutter according to her skill and activity, may make from four to seven shillings a-day; and in former times, when so high as

a shilling a barrel was sometimes allowed during a press of work and scarcity of hands, their gains were actually enormous. An expert and practised company of three can make up among them sixty-three barrels in a day, or twenty-one barrels each, so that in the glorious times alluded to a gutter might have kept her gig, and driven to the scene of action daily.

The continuance and productive nature of this herring harvest vary with the season. The Wick coast fishery usually commences about the third week in July, and is carried on more or less successfully for about six or eight weeks. The principal stations, besides Wick itself, are Keiss, Staxigoe, Broadhaven, and Sarclet. The average annual number of boats employed at these various stations for the last ten years is about 900.* The average annual quantity of fish taken for the last twenty years is 88,500 barrels, each barrel containing from seven to eight hundred fish. The quantity *cured* in the season of 1840 (the last for

* This includes the stranger boats from the Firth of Forth and elsewhere. The native boats employed in the fisheries of 1840 amounted to 441.

which reports have been made up) was 68,730 barrels, of which nearly 58,000 were exported,—51,477 barrels having been sent to Ireland alone. An intelligent fish-curer, Mr. Holmes of Liverpool, with whom we conversed upon the subject, and whose stock is chiefly consumed by the Irishmen of that great commercial city, informed us that he cures his herrings *ungutted*. He uses St. Ubes salt in preference to that from Liverpool. It is dearer, but marine is thought better than mineral salt. The total quantity cured that year along the British coasts, so far as brought under cognisance of our fishery officers, was 557,262½ barrels. All these were Scotch, under the following deductions: Isle of Man, 26,505 barrels; North Sunderland, 23,352½ barrels; Whitby, 100 barrels.* The value of a boat of the best class,

* It may be here noted, with a view to show the importance of our fisheries of herring, cod, and ling, as a source of productive occupation, that in the year 1840 the number of boats employed in the shore-curing department alone, (including those of the Isle of Man and English stations), decked and undecked, was 12,422: of fishermen and boys engaged as crew, 53,939: of coopers, 2231: of people, chiefly women, employed in gutting,

with its full complement of nets and tackle may be estimated at from £140 to £150. The drifts generally consist of twenty-four nets of about forty yards in length, that is in all about half a mile. Each boat has been calculated to average from 100 to 150 crans, at from ten to twelve shillings a cran. Then come the coast of salt, cooperage, gutters' wages, and curers' profits, so that the final gain is probably not great at £1 per barrel of herring, the usual price to the public.

The *viscera* of each barrel are sold for a penny, and are carted away by the farmers as manure. We met with many of these rich freights on the outskirts of the town proceeding landwards. And so by means of these "intestinal canals" the products of the sea are conveyed to the inner country, to cherish the waving crops of golden grain, or the greener herbage of the sweet breathing meadows, which fail not by the bland chemistry of

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packing, and drying, 27,379 : of labourers, 6093 ; making a total of 89,642 individuals, besides 1908 merchant fish-curers. See *Report* by the Commissioners for the Herring Fishery of their Proceedings for the year ending 5th April 1841.

nature to transmute those fishy exhalations, and thus

> " Dispense
> Native perfumes, nor whisper whence they stole
> Their balmy spoils."

The general view of this great herring mart from some lofty terrace ground on the south side of the harbour, and leading to the modern portion of Wick called Pulteneytown, is extremely curious, and on the morning of a good take of fish really extraordinary. You there command a bird's-eye view of all that is going on around the ranges of herring troughs below, and if distance lends enchantment to the view, she certainly renders it also sweeter to the other sense. On the morning of our first visit many boats had captured forty crans,—we have already mentioned that a cran contains seven or eight hundred herrings, according to individual size,—and as above 700 boats had emptied their captures into Wick alone, the amount of the entire supply when all had showered their silvery treasures into the troughs along the quays, may be more easily conceived than counted. We understood that we had at this time within sight accommodation in the way

of barrels for 50,000 crans, that is, for about forty millions of herrings, sinking offal.

He would, however, be a bold man who should take a census of the gutters. We thought it would have looked somewhat presumptuous and inquisitorial in ourselves as strangers to have done so, and therefore we know not their amount at the time in question; but the minister informs us that during the preceding season (1840) they amounted to 2175. From what we witnessed of their prowess, we doubt not that if arranged in battle array they would have gained the day at Waterloo, long before Blucher came up. We know that at present no Frenchman dare come within three miles of them.

Although the great success which has attended the Wick fishery for a length of time, must have augmented the pecuniary resources of the population, we fear it has not in a corresponding measure increased their comfort. Bearing in mind that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," it is easy to suppose how little moral superintendence can be exercised over a miscellaneous crowd of 10,000 strangers of both sexes, congregated together dur-

ing the fishing season within the narrow bounds of Wick, and how many disadvantages must flow from the absence of social and domestic restraints. "The ungodly who earneth wages" is apt to spend them in undue indulgences, and it is well known that during the fishing season much "strong drink" disappears. "It may seem incredible," says the Rev. Charles Thomson, "but it has been ascertained that during the six weeks of a successful fishing, not less than 500 gallons a day were consumed." "Of late years the people have been more temperate. Snuffing is almost universal among the men, and both it and smoking are very common among the women. About £3500 a year are spent in the parish of Wick on tobacco."* A total abstinence society has been recently established, and many fishermen have joined its ranks. There are fifty-four inns and public-houses in the parish,—probably quadruple the number in any way required by the necessities of the people. There is a great and admitted want of pastoral superintendence,—the population within the *quoad sacra* parish of Wick amounting to

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 145.

nearly 8000, while the (Established) church accommodates only 1835. There are probably above 2000 Dissenters of various denominations, but even under that deduction, the spiritual wants of the large remainder cannot be efficiently ministered to by the exertions, however zealous and unceasing, of a single clergyman. It was a favourite maxim of our old reformers that there should be throughout the land a kirk and a minister for every 1000 inhabitants, and a school beside every kirk. We agree with Mr. Thomson that "morality can neither be communicated nor upheld without the full and abundant administration of the gospel."*

We were glad to escape for a time from the throng into which our inquiries led us, and join the Secretary in a quiet walk with the fishery officer, in the direction of Sinclair's Bay. We found a small harbour, a little to the eastward of Ackergill Tower, erected, we believe, by the Honourable George Dunbar, Master of Duffus. It has, however, been already partly demolished by the trampling waves, which come in with great

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 167.

violence from the eastwards. But this corner of the bay affords a better and more sheltered anchorage than that of Wick, being screened by Noss-Head from the south-east wind. It is at the same time very open to the east and north. Turning to the right hand, we proceeded along shore, and speedily came upon the two ancient castles of Sinclair and Girnigoe, built within a foot or two of each other, and presenting in their combined ruins an imposing pile. The reason of their being built in such immediate proximity we did not learn, but if held at any time by rival chieftains, we pity the adherent who happened to look out of a window any fine morning with his visor off.

These singular twin-castles stand on a long and narrow range of peninsular rock, surrounded on the north by the wide waters of Sinclair's Bay, and separated from the mainland on the south by a dark and deep ravine or goe, into which the ocean flows. A ditch and drawbridge probably defended the landward or connecting neck in ancient times. The Castle of Girnigoe is the more ancient of the two. It occupies the entire surface of the farther portion of the peninsula, its outer walls being in most places perpendicular with the

plumb-line of the natural rock. Indeed the great slaty seams of the rock itself, lying in horizontal flakes, and the superimposed order of the same slaty material when used in building, so resemble each other, that it is not now easy to distinguish the craft of man from the handiwork of nature. Girnigoe constituted in ancient times the chief baronial stronghold of the Sinclairs, Earls of Caithness.* The ruins are still extensive. The terminal portion of the rock is occupied by a chamber called the Earl's bed-room. It communicated by means of a trap-door and rocky aperture with the sea. It is on a lower level than the court and tower, and between it and the latter there are ranges of apartments on either side, although a portion of the space next the land seems to have consisted

* Prior to the middle of the fifteenth century this Earldom had been enjoyed by three successive families who lost it either by forfeiture or extinction. It was renewed by a grant from James II. in favour of William Sinclair, Earl of Orkney (Chancellor of Scotland), a great-grandson by the female line of Robert II. The Earldom of Orkney being a Norwegian title (though confirmed by a Scottish king) was resigned to the crown in the reign of James III. It was revived after the lapse of more than a couple of centuries (William and Mary, 1696), but not in the family of the Sinclairs of Caithness.

merely of a strong wall, pierced with loop-holes. The tower is of considerable height, and consisted originally of various storeys, but these are not now accessible, owing to the stairs and flooring having given way. On the ground floor beneath the tower are several vaulted apartments, and from one of these a dark steep slimy passage descends into a small and gloomy dungeon, lighted obscurely by an aperture at some height in that portion of the wall which overhangs the sea. You descend into it with stooping head and hands groping along the crumbling walls, your feet sliding ambiguously where once were steps. Here a dreadful tragedy was enacted in the olden time, that is about the year 1576. It is variously related, but the following outline, in which we follow Mr. Galt, may here suffice. It appears that John, Master of Caithness, surnamed Garrow, by reason of his great strength, had incurred the displeasure of his father, George the fifth earl of the Sinclair name (for Caithness was ruled by Orcadian earls of Scandinavian blood, till towards the middle of the 14th century), some say because he would not execute his parent's revengeful hatred on the town of Dornoch, and extirpate its inhabitants, while

others allege that father and son were rival candidates for the favour of Euphemia, an only daughter of the house of Reay. This lady being herself young and beautiful, naturally preferred the more youthful aspirant, upon which the old earl determined to put him out of the way, though not by the dirk, as was then the usual practice. One afternoon, as they were sitting together in the hall of the second storey, the wrathful earl thrice clapped his hands, when in rushed three stalwart kerns in armour, who seizing the heir-apparent, dragged him to the dungeon-vault below. How long he lay there we shall not at present venture to say, but the older nobleman being some time after obliged to render attendance at the court of Scotland, held in Stirling, left his son in custody of a certain Murdow Mackean Roy. The latter was in some way persuaded to connive at the prisoner's escape, but the plot being discovered by William, an amiable brother (the Earl's second son), Murdow was executed on the spot. After this William went down stairs one morning to enquire for his brother, to remonstrate with him on the extreme impropriety of desiring to make his escape, and to threaten him with severe and

immediate punishment if he ever attempted any thing of the kind again. Upon this the Master of Caithness, who could scarcely be expected to be in very good humour, instantly sprung, though ironed heavily, on the unsuspecting William, and clasped him with such strength of affection in his fettered arms, that, like Gilbert Glossin in after times, he died. In a family struggle of this kind we believe it is of immense advantage to be fastened to the floor by an iron ring, because nobody can drag you out of the room, and so if you just persevere in holding on, and keep pressing your friend's throat against your own chain-cable, you bring him to an anchor soon enough. Two lads of the name of David and Inghrame Sinclair were then appointed guardians of the dungeon, but they soon availed themselves of the Earl's absence and the confusion occasioned by Lord William's unexpected death, and embezzling the money in the castle, they fled the country, leaving their unfortunate charge to die of famine.

This was the first act of the tragedy. The second has also some striking features. While the Earl lamented the fatal effects of his own rash and unnatural rivalry, he cherished his thirst for ven-

geance against the Sinclairs. Having heard many years after, that Inghrame, who had retired upon his booty, was about to celebrate his daughter's marriage with great festivity, he proceeded to that part of the country under the pretence of hunting in the vicinity of his residence, and then availing himself of the hospitalities of the occasion, he entered the banquet-hall and slew Sinclair in the midst of his rejoicing. There is another edition also of this passage of our history. The old earl having been succeeded by his grandson George, (son of John Garrow of the Dungeon) the latter, in the spirit of the times, began his career by avenging his father's death. This of course presupposes that the Sinclairs were still alive. David was residing at Keiss and Inghrame at Wester, both in the neighbourhood of Girnigoe. The daughter of the latter was to be married, as above reported, and a large assemblage was invited to the wedding. Earl George first encountered David on his way to Wester, and ran him through the body with his sword. He then continued his ride, and proceeded to the festival, where he found Inghrame playing at foot-ball. "Do you know," said he, accosting the faithless retainer,

" that one of my corbies missed fire this morning," —and drawing the companion of the said corbie, which was a horse-pistol, from his holster, he shot him through the head. These were what are generally called the good old times.

The adjoining ruin of Castle Sinclair, which is that portion of the pile nearer the mainland, is apparently of more modern structure, though actually in a more dismantled time-worn state than its hoary brother. A large mass of it fell into the ravine which forms the natural defence of the general building on the south, and a huge lump of tenacious stone and lime still lies on the left, as you approach the ruins of this smaller castle. Only a few rent walls remain and one tall slender chimney stalk, probably a portion of what was once the main tower. George (surnamed the wicked) Earl of Caithness obtained an Act of Parliament by which, about the commencement of the 17th century, the ancient name of Girnigoe was changed to that of Sinclair. The combined ruins, however, are still denominated Castles Sinclair and Girnigoe, the former applying more exclusively to the more modern portion. It forms the slender pile to the left-hand side of the preceding

etching. Although these buildings are so closely contiguous as to constitute in fact a single group, the only communication between them seems to have been by means of a passage leading through the tower of Girnigoe to the edge of an interior chasm, over which it is presumed a draw-bridge afforded access to the smaller castle.

There is a great expanse of cultivated land in this quarter, and the turnip crop seemed excellent. We returned to Wick by a nearer cut across the fields. We perceived hanging from numerous houses the " humida vestimenta " of the nymphs of the salting troughs hung up to dry, and themselves in proud array, as Spencer says, " all decked with gay ribbánds." Many of the adjoining fields were covered with nets,—these important implements being carted up, so soon as the herrings are picked off, and spread upon the ground. They would dry better and more speedily on poles. On passing through Pultneytown, and walking along the heights which overlook the pier, we had a striking view of the harbour and its numerous vessels, their many-coloured flags and streamers flaunting in the breeze, and, alas ! for what ? The beloved daughter of one of the principal inhabit-

ants of the burgh, much connected with the shipping trade, had a few hours before been conveyed to the "narrow house," and this it seems was the customary mode of expressing respectful sympathy in the sorrow of the bereaved parent. The fronts of the curing stations were still crowded with people pursuing their various avocations, and the majority of the women were still at work. By this time, however, the herring boats were again putting out to sea, and as the wind was rather blowing into the bay, we saw them under a new, but not less interesting and more prolonged aspect. Instead of running out freely in long continuous lines, they tacked to windward, crossing and recrossing each other's course in all directions, till the entire visible sea was covered with their sombre sails, and away they went for another haul of treasure from the exhaustless ocean. Ever and anon when we thought they had all departed, fresh sails sprung up as if by magic, and other gliding masses were put in motion. The slant declining rays of the evening sun showered golden light upon their countless dusky wings, changing them for a time into a deep orange hue, which contrasted strangely with the colder aspect of the glittering

sea. The scene was really beautiful. We found however that our "Captain's gig" had been fairly borne away by the strength of this long-continued stream of boats, and having been forced from the end of the pier, was waiting for us near the salmon net station farther eastwards. We got on board the Princess Royal to a late dinner, after a very interesting and instructive trip a-shore, and did not fail to dedicate a cordial cup to the health of the Secretary, who happened to be born one day on a 12th of August. No wonder the universal Highland hills rejoiced in a resounding blaze.

At an early morning hour of the 13th of August, we were compelled, in consequence of the wind having shifted so much to the eastward, to weigh anchor, and stand a mile or two off shore. About eleven o'clock we tacked towards the mouth of the bay, and took our way to Wick in one of the boats. The same busy scene was carrying on as that we witnessed yesterday. After transacting our fishery and other business we accompanied Mr. Eric Sinclair, Surgeon, to examine his beautiful and extensive collection of birds, obtained by him exclusively in the county of Caithness. These local museums are extremely interesting,

and of great value as illustrating the geographical distribution of species. The land birds, strictly so called, and the web-footed birds and waders, are of nearly equal amount in this the north-eastern extremity of Scotland, there being about ninety-three of the first group, sixty-five of the second, and thirty-four of that last named. As examples of the rarer species, we may select the following.

The Goshawk.	*Astur palumbarius.*
The Hobby.	*Falco Subbuteo.*
The rough-legged Buzzard.	*Buteo lagopus.*
The honey Buzzard.	*Pernis apivorus.*
The ash-coloured Harrier.	*Circus cineraceus.*
The pied Fly-Catcher.	*Muscicapa luctuosa.*
The great Shrike.	*Collurio excubitor.*
The black Red-Start.	*Phœnicura tythis.*
The Woodlark.	*Alauda arborea.*
The Waxwing.	*Bombycilla garrula.*
The lark-heeled Bunting.	*Plectrophanes lapponica.*
The ortolan Bunting.	*Emberiza hortulana.*
The Tree-Sparrow.	*Passer montanus.*
The Hawfinch.	*Coccothraustes vulgaris.*
The Crossbill.	*Loxia curvirostra.*
The Rose-ouzel.	*Pastor roseus.*

The purple Heron.	*Ardea purpurea.*
Baillon's Crake.	*Zapornia Baillonii.*

The red-legged Goose.	*Anser erythropus.*
The red-breasted Goose.	*A. ruficollis.*
The ruddy Shieldrake.	*Tadorna rutila.*
Brunnich's Guillemot.	*Uria Brunnichii.**
The little Auk.	*Mergulus alle.*
The little Gull.	*Larus minutus.*
The ivory Gull.	*Larus eburneus.*
The Iceland Gull.	*Larus Islandicus.*
The Manks Shearwater.	*Puffinis Anglorum.*
The Fulmar Petrel.	*Procellaria glacialis.*
Bullock's Petrel.	*Thalassidroma Bullockii.*

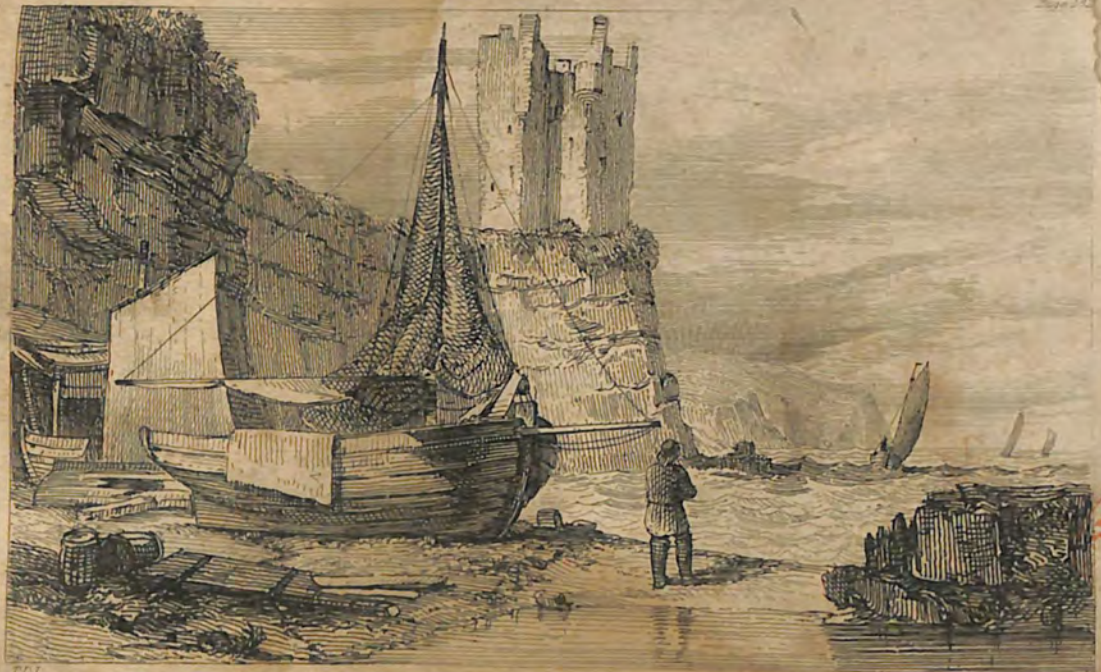
We then drove with the Secretary and the fishery officer of Wick for six or seven miles along the Huna road, as far as the Fishery Board harbour of Keiss, in Sinclair's Bay. The country we passed over was "weary, stale, flat," though probably by no means "unprofitable." It seemed increasing in cultivation, but the entire absence of trees bestows upon it a bare, exposed, and somewhat barren aspect. Numerous gulls were feed-

* We had the pleasure of naming this bird to the ingenious collector, who had been previously struck by the difference between it and the common species. This is, so far as we know, the first authentic example of its occurrence in Britain. We made its acquaintance many years ago in the Royal Museum of Copenhagen.

ing on the pastures, employed, as we think, in picking up the long-legged fly called *Tipula oleracea*, as it emerged from the pupa state. After proceeding northwards for four or five miles, we passed over a bridge of two arches, which spans the water of Wester, a deep and quiet stream flowing from a loch of the same name visible in the immediate neighbourhood to the left hand. The river has a course of rather less than a mile to the salt water. It looked as if sea-trout were in it, but duty called us onwards, and other three miles brought us to the harbour of Keiss. This is a nice little haven, giving shelter to twenty-four large boats. The plan is good, and the work well executed, but it is to be regretted that it had not been made larger from the first. This might have been done at a comparatively small increase of expense, by carrying the piers farther out before making the returns. A few stones have fallen out, and considerable dilapidation may accrue, if some slight preventive repairs are not soon effected. The boats here had had an excellent fishing during the preceding night, several having taken forty and forty-five crans, and the average being scarcely under twenty. The cooper at the curing

station seemed at a loss how to overtake the business of the day. He said it was the largest capture that had occurred during the fifteen years of his occupation there. But the gutters were crossing the fields in all directions, and arranging themselves with drawn blades in battle array. "Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together."

A little further onwards stands a tall, thin, grey, ghastly-looking spectre of a castle, overhanging a rocky portion of the beach, which is elsewhere for the most part rather low and sandy. This is the ancient fortalice of Radder, called also Keiss Castle. It was formerly a stronghold of the Earls of Caithness, but is now the property of Mr. Macleay of Newmore. While looking through one of its narrow loop-holes down into the sea, a large seal put up his dog-like head, and unconscious of our presence, stared around him. He seemed happy, and contented with his situation in life, and so we did not long for a rifle to drive a ball through his unoffending skull. Yet there are many who would have regretted losing such a "glorious opportunity." This castle is extremely picturesque. Not so the more modern



REISS' CASTLE, SAITEMES

building called Keiss House, which has a very cold, forlorn, repulsive aspect, like an old staring barn of three storeys high, the main door giving unchecked ingress to ducks and poultry. The crumbling crown of a circular pigeon-house was stocked with a large flock of starlings. The country around seemed populous, at least on our way back to Wick we met crowds of people returning from market, among others two girls riding *a la fourchon* on the same horse, and a very grave elderly woman in a corresponding predicament. In our eyes her position seemed somewhat peculiar (although we have seen it practised in foreign lands), but she herself looked as solemn and self-satisfied as if she had been sitting in the Minister's pew. We returned in good time to Wick, and were picked up on the north side of the harbour. A few herring boats were still only returning from the preceding night's fishing, having been out some fifteen miles north eastwards, not far from the Pentland Skerries, and been partially becalmed on the way home. Two of them had each taken forty crans, and one of these had lost eight nets from the excessive weight of the fish which had come across them. We

rejoined the Cutter off the mouth of the Bay, and again enjoyed the sight of the herring fleet beating outwards, one half streaming away on one tack, while the other was crossing on the opposite. We ourselves had to lie off and on at some distance from shore all night, in the midst of a heavy disconsolate swell from the eastward.

On the morning of the 14th of August, we could not help pondering on Loch Wester, and its placid stream, so before going ashore again about ten, we selected a few choice flies, and took our rod in hand. One of the sailor lads accompanied us, carrying a fishing basket, with a small supply of prog. The scene of ceaseless activity along both sides of the harbour, was, from the great take of fish the night before, more stirring than ever. In less than a couple of hours, we reached our own scene of action, and commenced at the bridge formerly mentioned, fishing down to the sea. Our angling instinct had not deceived us, for we killed not rapidly but regularly some of the finest, freshest, strongest sea-trout we had met with for a long time. The larger ones seemed to be travelling up the country in pairs, for we killed just a couple in each of several reaches of

the river. They are not cloud-cleaving trouts, but rather sedate, and almost heavy in their movements, swimming about for a length of time on being hooked, without much angry agitation either of head or tail, taking perhaps a single upward spring in the course of the encounter, and when at last they see they can make little more of the matter, striking to the enemy by turning up a broad expanse of side, and allowing themselves to be drawn gently inwards to any shallow haven in the banks. Our best weighed about seven pounds the pair, as pretty grilse-like fish as you would desire either to kill or eat upon an autumn day. We did not try Loch Wester.

When we reached the sea-shore, and were ruminating our return to Wick, we suddenly espied the Cutter at anchor in Sinclair's Bay. The wind had been blowing easterly and in shore for a day or two, which had forced us to weigh anchor and stand off and on at a considerable distance from the harbour, which was inconvenient for business during day, and not particularly pleasant for repose at night. As our Wick business was now nearly over, the Cutter (or at least her pilot) had preferred running round to Sin-

clair's Bay for the night, where there was a better shelter. This unexpected arrangement saved us a walk of several miles. Making our way along a sandy shore, covered with waving bent grass, through which at intervals rabbits bounded for a moment and disappeared as if they had never been, we came upon the Cutter's boat and crew employed in taking in a few casks of fresh water, and got speedily on board. We found that the Secretary, who had started in the morning with the fishery officer of Wick, and the general inspector of the east coast, upon business to a more southern harbour called Sarclet, had not yet returned. So we had time to look about us.

Sinclair's Bay is formed by a wide open semicircle, scooped as it were out of the land, the shore being for the most part low and sandy, and presenting as most of the Caithness bays seem to do, a most marked and striking contrast both in form and composition to those deep narrow land-locked and far receding harbours which we had so recently visited during our western progress. Here we have neither trees nor mountains, but numerous substantial-looking farm houses are seen along the brow of the shore, and the whole country

along the Bay, excepting merely the sandy or shingly lines of wave-worn shore, and some rocky promontories here and there, is covered by a rich and varied vegetation, more resembling that of a southern county than what might have been predicted of the most northern portion of all Scotland. The extreme levelness of Caithness affords great facility for making roads in straight lines, which of course are always the nearest, and also the most economical, by requiring the least sacrifice of land; but they are sadly monotonous and anti-picturesque, and wofully wearisome to the pedestrian, who instead of being enlivened and refreshed by windings and turnings which bring new and unexpected objects into view, sees nothing before him but an endless everlasting line, which seems to "grow by what it feeds on," whatever that may be. But sensible people who ruminate "de re rustica," and not only dwell in but cultivate the country, who have hay, corn, and turnips, and manure, and herring guts, to carry to and fro, no doubt prefer the easy communication afforded by these level roads to all the ups and downs of more rocky and romantic regions.

The Secretary did not arrive till ten at night, by which time we were all well inclined for dinner, and did ample justice to one of the finest of the sea-trouts of Wester Water. It was first-rate. After due refreshment, the Secretary reported his travels. On his way southward he had passed Hempriggs (the residence of Lord Duffus), distinguished by a grove of ill-thriven trees. People don't plant in sufficient masses here to give a fair trial to arboreal vegetation. Passed the Loch of Hempriggs to the right. Not far from Thrumster House is the "standin' stane o' Thrumster," regarding which the tradition of the district is, that Margaret, the Maiden of Norway, heiress of the Scottish crown, was entombed beneath it. Sarclet harbour is built in a deep voe, between lofty rocks and banks. Nothing can surpass the excellence of the work of this harbour. Some of the stones are ten feet in length, all placed vertically. There is a curing store here, and the same busy scene of evisceration was being enacted as elsewhere. There were thirty-eight large boats, and several smaller ones. The formation of this harbour affords a good example of the triumph of ingenious and perse-

vering labour over natural difficulties, which might have been deemed insuperable. What is chiefly wanted now is the excavation of the rock from the bottom of the harbour towards the quay, and from the foot of the sloping slip up which boats are drawn in bad weather, to the same depth as that within the pier. But the rock is of the hardest description, and so shivered that no blasting would have any great effect. The labour of working it out would therefore be immense. The Secretary had proceeded on to the village of Lybster, walking from the same down a steep zigzag road to the harbour, which lies at the mouth of a little glen, with a stream that does considerable damage. The harbour works here were all done by Mr. Sinclair of Lybster. The harbour is of considerable size, and was literally crammed full of boats and other vessels, among which were two French ones, L'Espoir and Le Nicolas, both of which were curing their own caught fish on board themselves, through the medium of Scotch gutters. Business very active here, 130 boats being in occupation. He (the Secretary) had also proceeded as far as Latheron-Wheel. A small stream likewise here discharges

itself through the shingle into the harbour. On the western point there is a stack which Mr. Dunbar (the Honourable Robert) has endeavoured to connect with the main by a too perpendicular piece of work, some of which has been in part washed out. On the west side he is now projecting a pier from a naturally projecting rock. It would probably have been as well placed fifty feet further out. A good deal, however, has been excavated inside, and the work doing seemed excellent, the stones being put in at an angle of about 45°. These are of great size, one which was measured being nine feet down by ten feet in length. There are from forty-five to fifty boats at Latheron-Wheel, and they already lie in safety. The only other fishing station visited by the Secretary this day was that of Whalligoe, which he took on his homeward way to Wick. About 100 yards off the road stand the curing stores of Mr. Millar of Leith, and a little way below these the curious enquirer finds himself on the edge of the cliffs which drop downwards above a couple of hundred feet into the wild and narrow voe of Whalligoe, his eyes at once falling from that giddy height upon the topmasts of a large schooner re-

ceiving her herring cargo. Mr. Millar has cut out a zigzag passage in the face of the otherwise impracticable cliff, and has there planted a good stone stair of 330 steps, in most places six feet wide, with shelves here and there for the women who bring up the nets, &c. to rest their burdens on. It is really a wild romantic spot, and might serve as the screened lurking-place of some pirates of Vikinger race, though fortunately now more honestly and usefully employed. Vessels entering here anchor outside, and letting out their cable, they are hauled in stern foremost, and then moored on each side. The heaving of the windlass in the schooner, the wild voices of the boatmen as they hauled their crafts, the screaming of the sea-fowl, and the busy talk of a number of good-looking country girls, with the hoarse pervading murmur of the sea, all added to the effect of this truly singular place.* Mr. Millar rents the adjoining land from the Ulbster estate. His cottages are all in nice condition, honeysuckled walls and well kept gardens being the order of the day, and a corresponding increase of happiness

* Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *MS. Journal*, p. 88.

and comfort following in the train of this tasteful inroad on the habits of the Scottish people.

The parish of Latheron forms the most southern portion of Caithness, and is much more mountainous, especially in its western division, than the rest of the county. The coast line is bold, rocky, and precipitous, with numerous caves frequented by seals, the occurrence of which creatures is supposed by some to have given name to the parish.* A good deal of Gaelic is still spoken here. The facilities for the conveyance of stock afforded by steam navigation have been of considerable advantage, and excellent cheviots are reared on the estate of Langwell and others. A breed between that kind and the Leicester is becoming common, while in regard to cattle a cross between the Teeswater and the Highland breed is held in good repute. The fishing stations are the following: Dunbeath, Latheron-Wheel, Forse, Swiney, Lybster, Clyth, and East Clyth. These in 1838 employed 325 boats, connected with which were above 2500 persons. The value of the fisheries that year (to the captors, not the curers),

* *Làthair Ròin*, the resort of seals.

was 42,800 crans of herrings, which at nine shillings per cran was £19,260. There were also caught off shore 10,000 cod-fish, worth 6d. each, or £250, while the produce of two salmon streams is rented for about £300 per annum.* The Berriedale fishery for grilse and salmon is said to have improved since the herring fishery was discontinued there, and the same distinctive habits have been observed as in other places among the ascending fish when they reach the mouths of the main branches. "The rivers of Berriedale and Langwell unite when about 200 yards from the sea, and it is remarkable that the native fish of one river are rarely to be found in the other. At the spawning season, the salmon of both rivers seem to bear one another company till they come to the point of separation, when, from a curious peculiarity of natural instinct, each selects its native stream."†

We passed a tranquil night in Sinclair's Bay. On the morning of the 15th, breakfast was served rather later than intended, so that we did not

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxx., p. 88.

† Ibid.

get ashore in time to walk across to Wick to forenoon service, but we took the afternoon diet there, as delivered by a serious-minded young man about to proceed as Colonial Missionary to Port Adelaide. His discourse was on the desire of " a new country." He showed how eagerly many men desired it, and how, to better their worldly condition, they would compass sea and land, although wherever they went they could never hope to escape from sorrow and affliction ; that many in their expectation even of heaven itself merely desired an increase or continuance of earthly enjoyment, and that it was only through the teaching of the Holy Spirit that fallen man could be brought to desire such a new country, " that is a heavenly," as was prepared for the faithful followers of the Saviour. The congregation seemed very sedate and attentive.

The morning of the 16th was calm and beautiful. We were still at anchor in Sinclair's Bay. Went ashore in the boat to a lofty square keep called Ackergill Tower, one of the most ancient fortalices in the country, though still inhabited. We were politely received by the Master of Duffus, who resides permanently in this singular dwelling,

and was at this time enjoying the society of some sporting friends. We were delighted with the interior, which is in excellent order. The walls are of enormous thickness, probably ten or twelve feet, and having been bevelled away about the windows, each of the latter, at least in the principal room, is itself like a little lateral receding chamber. The principal apartment occupies the entire square of the tower. It is large and lofty, with a vaulted roof, and has for the sake of suiting the modern views of comfort and convenience been partitioned into two, so as to form a dining and withdrawing room *en suite*. The partition, however, scarcely ascends above half the height, so that you see the entire extent of the roof and upper portion. A wild swan was hanging high in air, guns and other sporting implements were in preparation, pointers and spaniels whined impatiently to be led away towards the moorlands, and that the 12th of August was already passed and gone was kindly and substantially demonstrated by several brace of grouse being ordered to be taken on board our boat. We examined most of the building, and ascending to the battlements,

enjoyed a commanding view of the neighbouring country, and the sweeping semi-cirque of Sinclair's Bay. The early history and period of erection of Ackergill Tower, we believe are quite unknown. It is admitted, however, that in the days of the Scandinavian Earls of Orkney, who ruled in Caithness till the year 1330, a great district of the county, and especially the portion surrounding Sinclair's Bay, belonged to a family surnamed De Cheyne, of whom the last representative in the male line was Sir Reginald, a "mighty hunter," known traditionally throughout the country by the name of Morar-na-Shien. He died in the middle of the fourteenth century, leaving no sons, but two very fair daughters, of whom the elder, Mariotta, was married to John de Keith, second son of Edward the Marischal, and her son Andrew in right of his mother succeeded *inter alia* to the lands of Ackergill. William, Earl of Caithness, married a daughter of Keith of Ackergill, which brought these estates into the family of Sinclair, from whom they passed away, and came eventually into that of Duffus, in which they now remain. Bloody feuds prevailed in these quarters during

the fifteenth century, between the Keiths of Ackergill and the clan Gun.

The Secretary proceeded across the country to Wick to complete the business in hand connected with the fishery service, while we returned from Ackergill Tower on board the Cutter, to ruminate rather on the bounty than the beauty of nature.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW MORE OBSERVATIONS ON HERRINGS IN GENERAL, AND ON THE WICK HERRINGS IN PARTICULAR, TO BE PASSED OVER BY THOSE WHO DO NOT CARE FOR FISH.

HAVING within the few preceding days witnessed the greatest herring-fishery in Britain, perhaps the most abundant in the world, it is natural that we should endeavour to keep in mind its more distinctive and peculiar features, and compare our impressions of the singular scene in question with what we had previously observed in other quarters. Therefore although this is not the place for any lengthened or special dissertation on such recondite mysteries as the food, habits, migratory movements, and other points which constitute the natural history of the herring, yet a few general observations relating to these subjects may not be altogether misbestowed.

Although it may be difficult if not impossible so to connect the characters of a salt-water loch, or other portion of the sea, in relation to the form

and structure of its protecting shores, the breadth and depth of its contained waters, the amount and nature of its marine vegetation, or the quality and abundance of its animal inhabitants, as causes bearing immediately or influentially upon valuable species like the herring,—still these are interesting, and may prove important elements in the general inquiry. Whatever the physical causes may be, there is no doubt of the fact, that the deep and almost land-locked waters of the west are not more distinguished by their multiplied ranges of majestic mountains, and the other pictorial beauties of their infinitely varied shores, than by the superior excellence of their herrings:—just as the comparatively monotonous and unindented eastern coast of Scotland, so bald and unbroken in its rock-bound barrier, produces a much inferior fish. Of course, it can never be a question as to whether romantic scenery exercises any influence over the inhabitants of the deep, but it may happen notwithstanding that that beautiful combination of sea and land, the external attributes of which are so well adapted to produce delight in the human mind, possesses attributes of another and more recondite nature, and may from peculiar physical

causes which no one can at present appreciate, be highly influential over the finny inhabitants of the great waters.

It is certainly a singular circumstance that notwithstanding all that has been alleged regarding the merits of the deep-sea fishery, said to be practised by the Dutch, and from which practice their reputed superiority is supposed to be derived, all our own best herrings are those which are not only near the shore, but almost land-locked by it on both sides. Many of our east country herrings are taken in what may be called the open sea, at a great distance from the coast, but they are never equal in character and condition to those which in the western lochs may almost be scooped out of the briny waters by a person standing on the rocky shore. This is what we would call the first great *geographical* fact in the history at least of British herrings.

It is well known that even along the otherwise exposed extreme northern coasts of Scotland, the herrings of Loch Eribol are of superior excellence, and it is equally notorious that that loch in the inward flow of its far-stretching waters almost emulates the sheltered firths of the western shores.

We found that the herrings even of Thurso Bay were generally superior to those caught on the other side of Dunnet Head, and on proceeding still farther eastward around Duncansbay Head, and coasting along the more exposed eastern coast of Caithness towards the great herring mart which we have so recently endeavoured to describe, the deterioration became still more striking. The Wick herrings, though remarkable for their vast abundance and great size, are never equal even in their best condition, to the smaller varieties of our western shores; and an additional proof of the ameliorating influence over these fish possessed by firths, and deep indented bays, may be deduced from the fact that these eastern herrings become sensibly better again within the shelter of the Murray Firth. They are of excellent quality even within the so-called *Fauces Terræ* of the Sutors of Cromarty. But this branch of the inquiry is not in a condition to be more than hinted at at present. We merely wish it to be understood that it is not the fact that the excellence of herrings depends upon their distance from the shore.

Another conclusion to which we have come is

that the herring is not a migratory fish in the proper acceptation of the term, but is merely subject, like most other species, to its periods of approach and recession to and from our shores, in accordance with certain natural instincts connected mainly with the important process of spawning, and the search for food. There is no season of the year in which these fish may not be captured along many portions of our Scottish shores.

We have found considerable diversity of opinion to exist, even among those best qualified to form one, regarding the natural character and distance from the shore of the spawning places of the herring. Although anxious to ascertain something definite in reference to this important department of the subject, we could not ourselves personally detect or ascertain, except inferentially, the existence of any special piece of spawning ground. At the same time opinions were delivered, and observations made, which bear upon if they do not decide the subject, and to some of these we shall now briefly refer.

It was, for example, the decided belief of the fishery officer at Campbeltown, as well as of other individuals whom we have since met with in the

course of our voyage, that great damage is done to the herring spawn along the coasts of Cantyre and elsewhere by the practice of trawling for turbot, and other fishes. But the most uniform and consistent account which we received in relation to these spawning beds was that regarding some shoal ground which lies a few miles off the Ayrshire coast, between Ballantrae and the Craig of Ailsa. There herrings have been ascertained to spawn in vast numbers. They are frequently captured in great quantities during or immediately subsequent to the performance of the spawning process, and are consequently in the very worst condition as food for man. These herrings are generally of small size, and it seemed the opinion of some of our informants that the locality alluded to was chiefly resorted to by young herrings which came there to spawn for the first time. If this be so, it would be of importance to ascertain the origin or local movements of that great shoal, because the term *mattie*, which designates the best of all herrings, applies in its original acceptation to a particular condition of a herring which has never spawned, and so these Ballantrae fish, which at the period of their actual capture are among the

worst known, would, if fallen in with a few months earlier, probably prove among the most excellent. The fact, however, of their being known to spawn on shoal ground at some distance from the shore is an interesting one in itself, certainly in accordance with our own observations along other portions of the coast, and may be regarded as affording something like a guiding principle in aid of future investigations. It may be added, that while this unadvisable fishing off Ballantrae is carried on over the shoal ground in question, a vast quantity of spawn is brought up adhering to the nets and ropes, and being thus displaced is probably destroyed.

In regard to the special character and position of the localities usually chosen by herrings for their spawning beds, although several of the fishery officers and others in the districts hitherto examined are of opinion that the rougher ground along shore covered with various kinds of weed and tangle, are the situations usually selected, yet the testimony of others rather confirmed the opinion that *sandy spits* of some depth and at a considerable distance from the shore are the more favourite places; and this latter opinion is sup-

ported by the position of the spawning beds off Ballantrae, by the complaints of the Cantyre people regarding the injury produced by trawling (which requires a smoothish bottom), and by our own more recent observations.

. Of course we did not neglect to make frequent and careful inquiry regarding the *periods* as well as the places of spawning, and in relation to this point there has also been considerable difference of opinion expressed at different stations. We use the term difference, however, not as inferring any essential contradiction, for we believe the actual fact to be, that the spawning time if not very different in places distant from each other, is at least so prolonged through a lengthened period, as to justify a variation in the statements even of accurate observers, of several months.* It is well

* For example, when we commenced our investigations about the middle of June we found many herrings so far advanced with spawn, that they must of necessity have deposited their ova in the course of a very few weeks at farthest, and yet when we closed our examination of the same subject at Scalloway, in Shetland, early in September, although many herrings there had already spawned, and more were just about to do so, others were not in a condition to perform that function for several weeks to come.

known that the Loch Fine fishery is advantageously continued even into what may be called the winter season, although there also spawned fish are found, though in smaller numbers than in many other places, during the earlier months of autumn.

It thus appears that not only do the herrings of our different coasts and counties differ in their times of spawning, but that there is a considerable variation even among those congregated in one and the same place. The principal period for the Scottish coasts in general seems to range from about the second week of August till early in November, although a few weeks only may be required for the spawning of each particular place, or portion of coast.

As to the point which has been of late years mooted among naturalists,—whether there is more than one species of herring properly so called,—our recent researches have not tended to illustrate that question in any direct or positive manner. Although in taking the extreme examples in respect to size and other characters, many differences become perceptible, yet a more general and enlarged examination of the innumerable interme-

diate and connecting links, make it impossible to draw the distinctive line, or to decide among the many millions which we had occasion to see together, which pertained to one imagined kind, and which to another. Although the fish named "Leach's Herring" by that accurate and trustworthy observer Mr. Yarrel, may exist as a distinct species, in insulated groups, along the British coasts, yet our opinion is that the "herring of commerce," that is, the innumerable shoals which the exhaustless sea pours forth so redundantly along our Scottish shores, all belong to one and the same species. Even the great and admitted difference in the periods of spawning is not sufficient to invalidate this opinion, seeing that this spawning is a long continuous process even among a shoal of herrings otherwise presenting among themselves no distinction either in size or general aspect. It would thus appear that if there are not two kinds of herrings, there may be two periods of spawning for the same species at different stages of its existence. We doubt not that the large herrings of Wick deposit their ova at a different time from the small ones of Ballantrae. But we think that there is no satisfactory support

to the opinion, entertained by many, that the same individual herrings spawn twice a-year,—in autumn and in spring.

It is obvious, moreover, that the great autumnal spawning does not account for the appearance, in several of our firths, during the month of July, of numerous small herrings not more than two inches long, unless either the spawn lies longer undeveloped, or the growth of the excluded young is slower, than we have hitherto supposed. The numerous small herrings also, which in mid-winter and early spring, we find so intermingled with the sprats or garvies, may be said to be too large for the laying of the immediately preceding autumn, and yet too small for that of the corresponding period of the year before. Although the Edinburgh market is supplied in summer from the Dunbar and Berwick coasts, yet the herring of the Firth of Forth properly so called, is a winter fish, generally appearing at the mouth of the firth about the end of December, although seldom advancing far up until some weeks later. Of these fish many have the ova highly developed, and very probably do not spawn till spring.

Another inquiry kept in view is that relating

to the food of herring. That food undoubtedly consists of a great variety of kinds, as is usual in the class of fishes, the great majority of which when inclined for aliment, are remarkable for an almost indiscriminate voracity. But there are periods in the life of this species, as of the salmon and several other fishes, in which it may be almost said to exist in a self-sustained condition, or at least requires but a small supply of food of a more delicate and almost microscopic nature. Although experimental observations of a continuous kind cannot be made upon individual herrings, nor indeed scarcely at all on any salt-water fish strictly so called, yet an analogical inference may be drawn from what we actually know of other fishes. Many of the carp kind, the gold-fish, for example, may be sustained in good condition for months and even years without other sustenance than that which they obtain from apparently pure water. But they rarely breed under the pressure of these "*res angusta domi*," and if by chance they should approach towards the spawning state, they are apt to perish from the emaciation and exhaustion produced by a condition which absorbs into the generative system whatever is redundant

or available from other parts of the animal structure. So in regard to herrings when in the state of *matties*, or even when, less distant from the breeding state, they become filled either with melt or roe, their appetites become keener and more comprehensive in their range, and they then search after and devour many things which they would pass unregarded in their previous or less advanced condition.

Thus an abstinence or privation which in creatures of another class might be regarded as inexplicable if not impossible, comes in the case of fishes within the range of ordinary events. It certainly seems to be an established fact, that herrings in prime condition scarcely ever contain within them any animal substances of the grosser kind. Yet it need not be supposed that their high condition results either negatively from the absence of that food, or positively from the presence of any other kind of a better and more nutritious nature. It is rather the result of two causes combined, and acting on each other. It is an essential and constitutional quality of these as of all other fishes, to exist in high condition only for a certain portion of each successive year after

they have assumed the functions of the parent state. But their prime condition is no more either the sole consequence or immediate result of a favourite and fitting food than the symmetrical strength or beauty of any healthful individual of the human race is the effect of good living, independent of those more general laws by which Providence has seen fit to regulate the constitution of man at different periods of his existence. A herring in bad condition from the near approach of the spawning season may be amply supplied with the finest food without any improvement of that condition,—while one in the highest order may assuredly indulge itself, if so inclined, in coarser diet, without at all impairing that constitutional excellence which is for the time being its natural and inherent characteristic. We had satisfied ourselves of these facts during former investigations, and have had the satisfaction amply to confirm them in the course of the present voyage. For example, many of the Wick herring in worst condition were filled with what has been justly regarded as the most beneficial food, while those off the Oban shore, which, wanting some months of the spawning period, were necessarily

in much finer order, were being caught in considerable quantities every evening (during the end of June and beginning of July), by means of a white feather, or artificial lure, made in imitation of their own fry, and that of other fishes, of which they were then in search, but of which it has been alleged they are never desirous unless when labouring under the depraving influence of low condition.

Indeed it seems sufficiently obvious, that as the great mass of herrings are in good condition at certain seasons, and in bad condition during certain others, and as the simplest observation suffices to connect that variation of condition with the more or less advanced state of the generative system, there is less necessity than is usually supposed for seeking to connect the excellence of the fish in question with any thing very special in the nature and abundance of its food. The food of fishes is in truth much less subject to variation either as to amount or quality, than is the sustenance of land animals, because while on the one hand the promises of spring, and the actual products of summer, form respectively far less prominent features of these seasons in the moist abodes inhabited by the finny tribes, so on the

other hand, amid those tranquil depths the decay of autumn and the desolate character of winter are to a great extent unknown. There is a uniformity of climate in the ocean waters, and a corresponding uniformity of condition in their inhabitants, so far, that is, as the direct action of external influences, and even of food, is concerned, which places these creatures in a very different position from land animals,—the latter being necessarily subjected to much greater alternations of climatic influence.

If a body of herrings which has spawned in autumn is met with in the course of the ensuing summer at any considerable distance from the shore, that body is in fine condition not simply because it is "far at sea," and revelling among millions of Entomostraca (which by the bye occur in greater numbers nearer shore) but because they have entirely recovered from the exhausting and deteriorating effect of the fulfilment of one of the great objects of their existence—the continuance of their kind. Their constitution has not only recruited itself by its own inherent energy, but they are now approaching what may be called their condition of *redundant* excellence, which for-

tunately, or rather we should say providentially, fitting them for the food of man, enables them also to nourish within them those countless embryos which are afterwards developed and discharged in due season.

That the nearer or more distant approach towards the breeding state affords the true measure of a herring's excellence, has been already confirmed during the present voyage, both by personal observation and the miscellaneous information acquired by conversation with the fishery officers, and others, with whom we have come in contact. It is also proved, we think, by the fact, that while the physical circumstances as to food, climate, currents, depth of water, &c., by which a large body of fish may be at any given time and place encompassed, are of uniform character, it is yet easy to perceive a considerable diversity of actual condition in different individuals of the shoal. This arises partly from the great body being necessarily in some measure composed of family groups of unequal age, in which the development of the spawn is not synchronous or in exactly corresponding times, and partly because even individuals of the same age and family differ

from each other in sexual maturity. From both of those circumstances, although from the former more than from the latter, a perceptible range if not diversity of the spawning period is the result. That on the whole, however, individuals of a nearly corresponding age and character usually consort together, is obvious from the general uniformity of size and aspect which prevails among them when viewed under similar conditions of time and place.

Believing that the most ordinary powers of observation are sufficient for the examination of many matters of great interest, and knowing that in relation to the food of fishes it is not the capacity to solve the deeper mysteries of physiology that is required, but merely the use of our eyes, of the finger and thumb, and a pair of scissors, we have at various times made frequent dissection and examination of the different kinds or conditions of herrings, called matties, full fish, and spent fish, as well as of the intermediate links which connect together these extremer states, and the results have been uniformly the same. The apparent condition of the fish, that is, its aspect to the eye, corresponded to its real condition when

tested more effectively after certain culinary proceedings, and both the seeming and the actual were always found to bear a near relation, or rather the closest connection with the development of the melt and ovaries, while no such obvious relationship could be perceived to exist between the state of the fish and the contents of its stomach.

The term *mattie* was originally applied to such herrings as had never spawned, but were just approaching that redundant state which precedes the rapid development of the sexual system. In other respects they have scarcely yet attained their full proportions as the genuine matties are smallish herrings, certainly somewhat below what may be called the medium size. Although it was in relation to those individuals that the term in question was first used, it is now applied without any such special discrimination, and is bestowed on all such finely formed fish as during the earlier portion of the season are found only *approaching* towards the breeding state, even although they should have already spawned in former years. The term is used by and borrowed from the Dutch, and as that nation is supposed

to fish frequently at a greater distance from the coasts than is the practice of others, it may be, that as herrings in the condition of matties, being far from the exigencies of the spawning period, probably keep for a time at a greater distance from the shore, so the Dutch herrings, irrespective of any difference in the mode of cure, may average a higher quality simply because they average a greater number in that precise condition during which they are best fitted for the food of man.

In regard to the respective merits of the Dutch and British modes of cure, we think some misapprehension exists on this subject in the general mind, so far as these modes are deemed fit matters of comparison. To us it appears that their objects being different they should not be tried by the same test. The Dutch herrings deservedly bear a high character, and bring a corresponding price. They are skilfully and expeditiously cured, quickly sent to market, readily bought up, and speedily consumed. The great mass merely forms a delicate portion of the food of the wealthier or at least tolerably independent classes of the continental communities who can

afford to pay for such a luxury,—for salt herrings are certainly so esteemed in Holland and several other foreign countries, and never there constitute a main or even prevailing necessary of life among the poor and needy, as they are so well known to do in Britain and the sister isle. The Dutch fish are in a measure fresh salt herrings, than which none are better for a time, but they would not suit either our home consumption or our export trade, because they are not cured *with a view to prolonged keeping*, but must be eaten within a comparatively short period of their actual capture. Thus, however advisable it may be that a few thousand barrels should be salted by some of our own curers in accordance with the Dutch method for more immediate consumption, the general adoption of that method would certainly be unadvisable, as so ill suited to the object which ought to be kept in view, viz. a cheap, abundant, salubrious, and long-continued supply of food, both for rich and poor, to say nothing of the export trade to foreign lands. The great point is to sustain the character of our cured fish by a careful and unceasing superintendence, at the various stations, of the somewhat complex and occasionally

discordant interests of those most immediately concerned, and to prevent as much as possible the curing of ill-conditioned fish, whether that comparatively insalubrious state arises from those natural causes over which the captors can have no control, or from the fish being tainted by prolonged keeping before the process of cure has commenced, or by that process being inefficiently performed. The Official Brand, as observed in the recent Report by the Commissioners, is chiefly used for herrings intended for exportation. "It stamps a currency on the barrels to which it is applied, that enables them to pass unexamined from the hands of the fish-curer into those of the merchant, and from the hands of one merchant into those of another; and finally, it renders them saleable in foreign markets, without that frequent opening of the barrels and inspection of the fish, which would otherwise be rendered absolutely necessary for the satisfaction of the different parties, and which can in no case be resorted to without the greatest possible risk of injury to that which is in itself naturally an easily spoiled and perishable commodity."*

* *Report on the Herring Fishery*, for the year 1840, p. 1.

The true value of the brand must therefore depend on the scrupulous care bestowed on its application.

When we consider the vast multitudes and mixed condition of the herrings themselves even in the natural state, their irregular and often arbitrary changes of position from place to place, and the fact of there being no fixed period for a series of years, and an extended line of coast, at which it can be predicated that herring will assuredly make their appearance in a certain uniform and good condition, it becomes obvious that no legal enactment or provision can be made to regulate the capture of creatures whose movements are so often influenced by unknown and mysterious laws of which no human skill can take cognisance. But it is certainly desirable that all encouragement should be given to proper modes and periods, both of cure and capture, and every obstacle thrown in the way of a contrary procedure.*

* We here take leave to say that if such encouragement on the one hand, or restraining check upon the other, can be at all effectually yielded or imposed by good feeling, and activity, on the part of officers settled along the various stations where

To return again very briefly to the food and spawning ground of this important species,—some observations were made during our stay at Wick, and other portions of the Caithness coast, which certainly bear pretty strongly on these vexed questions. During the week which we spent in that vicinity, from the 11th to the 16th of August, the great congregated mass of eastern herring had evidently commenced the act of spawning. The shoreward portion of the town of Wick may be regarded at this time as the most favourable position in the empire for having simultaneously under view an almost countless number of herrings,—there being, as already noted, during the height of the season, above 700 boats discharging their captures every morning. An examination of this vast collection from time to time showed us that during the period of our

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this great and beneficial fishery is most successfully carried on, no doubt need be entertained that much is done by the present system. We can conscientiously declare our belief (as the result of very ample opportunities of recent observation) that the present officers are remarkable for sobriety and zeal, for the honourable and indefatigable discharge of their duties, and for their general intelligence of character, and consistency of conduct.

continuance the proportion of spawned fish was becoming greater every day, and their obvious haunts were within a distance of from three to seven miles from shore. That they were actually spawning somewhere within that range, was further proved by a circumstance which at the same time throws a curious light upon the diversified feeding propensities of these fishes. On dissecting half-a-dozen one morning very speedily after they had been taken, a quantity of spawn of their own species was found within their stomachs, showing that either from indolence or voracity in their search for food, they had been induced to swallow the floating contents of the spawning beds. As digestion is known to be very rapid among fishes, it was naturally inferred that this peculiar and still undissolved food had been taken into the stomachs of these individuals immediately before their capture, and as that capture happened to take place about four miles from shore, it seems an equally legitimate inference that the spawning beds lay at a nearly corresponding distance somewhere in that vicinity.

CHAPTER VI.

ORKNEY AND SHETLAND.

The Orkney and Shetland Isles lie still before us. We set sail from Sinclair's Bay on the morning of Tuesday the 17th, with a stiff breeze from the north-west. Keeping well outside the Skerries, we made for the eastern shores of South Ronaldsha, by which means we avoided a second jumble in the Pentland Firth. There is nothing decidedly interesting in the outer aspect of this portion of Orkney, the hills being of insufficient height to produce any grandeur of effect, and the general character being in consequence rather tame. But there were extensive tracts of apparently successful cultivation, and numerous small fishing-stations met the eye. We took a peep into Water-Sound, where many vessels were lying at anchor, and then stood along the coast of the more northern island of Burray, of a similar character to South Ronaldsha, and belonging ecclesi-

astically to the same united parish, which is one of considerable extent, including the Pentland Skerries on the south, and stretching northwards to the island of Glumesholm. There is often a productive fishery along these shores, although the exposed nature of the coasts renders the occupation hazardous during the winter, and little is done in that inclement season. "I have known," says the minister, "when there was not so much fish taken during five months as would furnish one meal to each inhabitant of the united parishes, and when even the cormorants died for want of food." In the year 1838, there were 245 boats belonging to the parish employed in the herring fishery, and 4066 barrels were cured. The total cure effected in the Orkney stores for that year amounted to above 12,000 barrels, but boats from other places had their share of profit, and the entire produce of the fishing is said to have greatly exceeded that amount. The cod fishing commenced in this quarter only in 1817, and eleven sloops belonging to the parish are now employed in it. In the year 1838 there were nearly 120 tons of cod, ling, and hake, dry cured, at a value of about £14 per ton.

Although the take of herring sometimes fails, it is understood that the fisheries in general of Orkney have much increased during comparatively recent years. Even as late as the commencement of the present century they were entirely neglected, but are now of such importance "as to bring in more money than the kelp used to do, even when the largest quantity was manufactured." This however does not compensate the kelp proprietors to the same extent as it benefits the people. The average number of Orkney sloops engaged in the cod fishery during these last three years was eighteen, and the quantity of cod cured in each of these years amounted to above 380 tons. The average number of herring boats belonging to Orkney during the same period was 724, and the annual amount of herrings cured ashore and afloat was 42,073 barrels. These fish are usually sold to the curers at about ten shillings per cran or barrel,* and the cod brings about the same price per cwt.—the two combined pro-

* A cran contains forty-five gallons of ungutted herrings,—a barrel thirty-seven and a half gallons, wanting what a clever young clerk from London, whom we met at Lerwick, called the *viscerers*. He thought we understood Latin.

ducing nearly £25,000 per annum. Now, the largest quantity of kelp ever made in Orkney in a single year (1826) was 3500 tons, which at £7 per ton would produce £24,500.*

During our last war period, however, in consequence of the importation of barilla being interrupted, or burdened by high duties, the price of kelp was sometimes £18 and £20 sterling per ton, and the profits of shore proprietors were enormous. Now, from the numerous insular divisions of the Orcadian territories almost all the proprietors here are possessed of coast, and the manufacture of kelp during the prevalence of the higher prices became an object of vast importance. It is said that small farms of £40 of yearly rent speedily rose to £300, and larger estates attained a proportionate increase of value. We have already stated, in relation to the Hebrides, that Lord Macdonald obtained a revenue of £10,000 a-year from his kelp shores alone,—these having been previously an unproductive possession. When the manufacture was first introduced into Orkney more than a hundred years ago, the employment

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxv.

being new to the people, was opposed with great vehemence. Their ancestors had never thought of making kelp, and they themselves seemed to have no desire to render their posterity any wiser than their predecessors. So virulent was their resistance to this new labour that officers of justice were required for the protection of those who engaged in it, and it was even gravely pleaded in a court of law "that the suffocating smoke that issued from the kelp kilns would sicken or destroy every species of fish on the coast, or drive them into the ocean far beyond the reach of the fishermen; blast the corn and the grass on their farms; introduce diseases of various kinds, and smite with barrenness their sheep, horses, and cattle, and even their own families." The influence, however, of those individuals who took the matter up eventually prevailed, and the subsequent benefits which ere long accrued to the community effected a change in public feeling. The value of coast estates rose so much in value that attempts were even made with some success to cultivate or increase the supply of sea-weed by covering sandy bays with stones. By this method, according to Dr. Neill, a crop of fuci may be produced in about

three years, the sea itself every where abounding with the necessary supply of seeds.* Dr. Barry informs us that for ten years, from 1790 to 1800, the quantity of manufactured kelp occasionally amounted to 3000 tons, and as the price was then from £9 to £10 per ton, the annual income from this source alone was sometimes £30,000 sterling. He adds, that in a period of about eighty years from the commencement of the manufactory until the close of last century, the proprietors of these islands, with a land rent not exceeding £8000 a-year, have, with their tenants and servants, re-

* The extremely rapid growth of certain kinds of sea-weed has been well illustrated by a fact observed by Mr. Stevenson, civil-engineer. In the autumn of 1813, a portion of the Carr Rock was cleared and levelled with a view to the erection of a beacon. It is only uncovered at the lowest ebb of spring-tide, and had been previously completely clothed with the larger Algæ, particularly *Fucus esculentus* and *digitatus*. The operations were abandoned in November, and resumed in May 1814, by which time it was covered as thickly as ever by newly produced plants of *F. esculentus* measuring six feet in length, and with common tangle, *F. digitatus*, two feet long. All these must have grown from seed in six months, as they were adhering to that portion of the rock which had been previously dressed with pick and chisel.

ceived in addition to their ordinary income the enormous sum of £595,000 sterling.

The kelp manufacture of Orkney, however, has now been entirely destroyed as a remunerating occupation, partly by the reduction of duty on Spanish barilla, an article of superior value for the purposes of making soap and glass, and partly by the almost entire removal of the duty on muriate of soda, or common salt. The rock salt of Cheshire, now so greatly reduced in price, is submitted to a chemical process by means of which the soda is separated from the muriatic acid, and the former is then found to answer so completely as a substitute for kelp (an impure carbonate of soda) as to be used when thus prepared by the great glass manufacturers of Newcastle. "So pernicious, however, are the fumes of the muriatic acid gas which issue from the soda works, that vegetation is destroyed to a considerable distance, and the proprietors have been compelled to purchase the ground in their immediate neighbourhood."*

In regard, however, to the Orcadian people, it may fairly be presumed, as well as hoped, that the

* GREVILLE'S *Algæ Britannicæ*, Introduction, p. 24.

increasing attention now bestowed upon the fisheries will compensate the disadvantages arising from the loss of kelp, and the sea-ware is still available as manure for land. In the year 1833 there were 34,000 barrels of herrings cured at the various Orkney stations, yielding, at 10s. per barrel, £17,000, and that same year the sloops took 560 tons of cod, which, at £13 per ton, brought £7280. The Fishery Report for last year (1840) states that the number of cod, ling, and hake, obtained by vessels and open boats connected with the Orkneys, was 369,014. The abundance of cod along these coasts may be inferred from the fact that the small farmers on the Island of Waas, with a few indifferent boats, employed only during the intervals of agricultural labour, have sometimes caught from 50,000 to 60,000 in a single season. The Orkney lobsters alone yield towards £2000 per annum.

As we entered Holm Sound we met the light-house vessel "Regent," and as we were both going through it to the westward, we had an opportunity of proving our superior rate of sailing. We had a head-wind and a lashing sea, and the fair-way being narrow we had to beat through on

rapid tacks, some of them indeed so short that the Cutter seemed scarcely to have started the length of her own fair form before she was again stayed. However, we speedily beat the Regent, leaving her far behind, and we could perceive that while our own decks were dry the seas were surging over her bows. The tide runs here with great velocity, and raises a high short sea when opposed to the wind, as it was at the present juncture. Some people have probably never even heard of Holm Sound, while others again regard it as one of the high-ways of the universal world. "Holme," says the minister of the parish, "has great advantages for navigation over the Pentland Firth and Caledonian Canal. In passing through Holme Sound, all that is necessary to be considered is the time of flood or ebb tide suitable to the course in view to be steered; and when this is observed, vessels on entering the sound are sure of falling in with a regular current, moving during spring-tides at the rate of nine miles an hour; and should any mistake occur as to the proper time of tide, there is safe anchorage in several parts of the channel, in which to await the

proper tide."* This Sound divides the island of Burray from the southern face of the eastern portion of Pomona, or the mainland of Orkney.

Northwards, on our right hand as we entered, lay the Kirk of Paplay, a name not unknown in other ecclesiastical portions of Orkney. The Paplays are the most fertile spots of a parish, and are so named on account of their having been anciently assigned to the papæ or priests of bygone times.† Mr. Vedder observes, in his *Orcadian Sketches*, "that the parish of Holm is perhaps one of the most beautiful in the Orcadian Archipelago. It slopes gently to the 'sweet south,' and is protected from the northern blasts by a range of heath-clad hills, sufficiently high for this purpose, without being high enough to retain their snowy covering on the return of spring. A considerable number of limpid rivulets meander from the heights to the shore, giving an air of fertility and freshness to the scene,—while the shore itself is laved by one of the noblest friths that can be con-

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxv., p. 225.

† *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxv., p. 226.

ceived,—rushing to and from the German Ocean with tremendous velocity, and with a noise, should the wind blow in an adverse direction, ten thousand times louder"—than what, thinks the reader? —"than the fall of Lodore, so admirably described by Southey!" That the German Ocean is in several respects a greater water power than the fall of Lodore, we willingly admit; but it seems to us somewhat invidious to bring the fall into such a briny as well as boisterous comparison. Besides, the human ear, like all our other organic capacities, is limited, and we doubt its power to receive an impression ten thousand times louder than the fall in question, when the latter is in good voice and free from cold (that is, unfrozen); and a more abstract or it may be arithmetical truth, unappreciable by the senses, of the one being a multiple of the other by 10,000, adds nothing to our notion of its power. We believe it to be actually more powerful by countless millions, but let any man put his ear within a yard or two of Lodore, and he will find it just as noisy as Holm Sound. However, every man for his own country. As the tanner said, there is nothing like leather.

A daily post has been now established between Pomona and the more southern portions of the world. It is carried first of all on foot to the ferry of Holm, from whence a four-oared boat conveys it across to Burray. The postman then proceeds over the last-named island to the ferry of Water Sound, where he again takes boat to the village of St. Margaret's Hope, in South Ronaldsha, and proceeding along the latter land for about eight miles to Burwick, on the Pentland Firth, another four-oared boat conveys the mail across to Huna, in Caithness, from whence a gig jogs with it some eighteen miles as far as Wick, where it meets a daily coach, communicating in one way or other between Thurso and the Land's End.

We now cleared Howquoy Head on the north, and the island of Glumesholm on the south, and running into the western mouth of Water Sound, a boat was sent into St. Margaret's Hope to bring the fishery officer on board the Cutter, and to enquire for letters for the crew, some of whom had ordered their dispatches to be there addressed. These duties were effected with some difficulty, the uproarious nature both of winds and waves

being unpropitious to the well-being of a small open boat.

We then beat across Scapa Flow, which is a splendid sheet of water, surrounded by land in almost all directions, the only grand or mountainous elevation, however, being that of Hoy Head in the western distance. Kirkwall, with its fine cathedral spires, and other ancient buildings, appeared over and beyond some low lying land to the northward, while to the south, within the sheltering shores of Hoy, lay Flota, Fara, Risa, and Cava, all, so far as we could see, low flattish islands, with nothing of interest in their outer aspect. We had just a peep into the Long Hope of Hoy, with its northern Martello tower. There is a rock here which is extremely troublesome to the fishermen, who are very desirous that the Northern Light-House Board should build a beacon on it. In a bight of the island of Flota, the fishery officer last year saw 180 small whales captured. They were sold for £2 and £3 each, and measured from ten to twenty-five feet in length.

As we beat up to the westward the high mountains of Walls in Hoy and Hoy-Head formed a

striking picture, contrasting finely with the low and apparently fertile isle of Græmsay, over which they towered. This island is placed centrally within Hoy-Mouth, and aids the land-locked shelter of Stromness Bay, in which we came to anchor at an early evening hour.

Stromness lies embosomed in a quiet semicircular bay, the background unimposing, low and green, sweet enough to look upon during a tranquil summer evening, or a cheerful morn, but with no such decided features as are likely to redeem its character when blighted by unfavourable atmospheric changes. The town itself is of great length, with something of an antique aspect, most of the gables of the houses being turned towards the sea, each with its own little wharf or jetty,—very handy, "I guess," at least in former times, for landing a keg of brandy or Scheidam. There seemed, so far as we could discern, no general pier or quay of any kind. Several schooners and a brig were lying at anchor, and many of the small boats were beautifully or at least gaily painted of a pale green colour,—very different from the dark and tawny tinge of those of Wick.

Before breakfast on the 18th of August we proceeded on board a welled cod-smack, which lay between us and the shore, to inspect her structure and contents. She was called the Pursuit, her size sixty-two tons old register, sloop-rigged, apparently a capital sea-boat, and said to go extremely fast. The skipper said he thought he would have no chance with the Princess Royal in light winds, but that in heavy weather he believed he might keep her at her speed. The well is immediately abaft the mast, boarded off from the rest of the vessel, and communicating with and receiving its water directly from the sea beneath, by numerous perforations in its bottom, of about two inches in diameter. Its length backwards from the mast seemed about ten or twelve feet, and its breadth nearly that of the sloop herself. The well is capable of holding about fifty score of live cod, and there were about ten score in it at the time of our examination. They seemed much subdued and softened by their captivity, and came ever and anon to the surface, with flat enormous heads, dim eyes, and gaping mouths. Though heavy and stupid in their aspect, they seemed to have their senses about

them, and speedily swallowed such portions of shell-fish as we dropped into their watery chamber. To produce perpetual change in the waters of the well, these vessels are usually either anchored in a tideway, or one of the sails is kept partially set, so as to produce a constant veering motion, and a consequent circulation of the briny flood. The fish are often confined in this way for a fortnight or three weeks, and if they show any symptoms of sickliness the usual medical routine is reversed in their case, that is to say, they are killed first and *cured* afterwards. Most of these cod sloops belong to a London Company. They venture with their cargoes up the Thames as far as Gravesend, beyond which the influence of the intermingling fresh water would prove destructive. From that point they are conveyed to market in boats with closed wells filled with sea-water. During all this lengthened period of confinement they seldom give them any food, although those we saw seemed well inclined to eat, from the rapid voracity with which they gobbled up our limpets.

In the course of the forenoon we weighed anchor, and running to the eastward of Græmsay,

landed on the mountainous island of Hoy, which in general exhibits a barren aspect, excepting some low lying land opposite Græmsay, where there seemed a large extent of cultivation. An ascent to the summit of the loftiest point of Hoy must yield a most commanding panoramic view of the entire group of Orkney islands, but this ambitious excursion was not proposed, and being ourselves, like Hamlet, "scant of breath," we were well pleased to remain in the low countries. We debarked near a great green hillock or Ting-wall, one of those partly artificial mounts used in ancient times as law-courts, both for the administration of justice and the promulgation of the laws. We proceeded up a wild heath-covered mossy glen, or rather open valley, by the side of a small rill, in which were trouts and stickle-backs. We saw neither tree nor shrub, excepting a single scraggy broken birch about three feet high, the sole remaining representative of the ancient woods which once prevailed. But the whole of this glen, with the sides and especially the retiring hollows of the hills, is well adapted for the growth of trees. To our right was the great Ward-hill of Hoy, the highest of the Orcadian mountains. We ascended

towards the head of the valley which extends along its eastern base, and a roughish walk of a couple of miles or more brought us to the mysterious "Dwarfie Stone" mentioned in the "Pirate," as that in which Norna beheld the Elfin Trolld. It consists of a huge single block of sandstone nearly thirty feet long, about fifteen feet in breadth, and some six feet high. It has a square opening cut in its western side, close to which lies a large square block, apparently intended to act as a door or stopper. Within the opening there is an excavation right and left, forming as it were two small chambers, lighted by a large central hole in the roof. That to the right hand is like a hollow bed, with a lateral edging, and a raised pillow at one end cut in the stone, the whole long enough for a short man; the opposite chamber is of a more circular form, without pillow. The entire stone is as flat as a flounder. It seems to have slipped during some boisterous night of bygone ages from its mother's lap, a high rocky range above, and into its interior some forlorn or whimsical or misanthropic individual, whether Norseman, Celt, or Saxon, we don't presume to say, has hewn the "Pillow cold and sheets not

THE LOGAN STONE NEAR HUT HEAD, CORNWALL.

warm" above described. The Orcadians believe it to have been the work of a dwarf, a being of malevolent attributes according to the Norse mythology, and hence it goes under the name of the Dwarfie Stone. "At the west end of this stone," says Dr. Wallace, "stands an exceeding high mountain of a steep ascent, called the Ward-hill of Hoy, near the top of which, in the months of May, June, and July, about midnight, is seen something that shines and sparkles admirably, and which is often seen a great way off. *It hath shined more brightly before than it does now*, and though many have climbed up the hill, and attempted to search for it, yet they could find nothing. The vulgar talk of it as some enchanted carbuncle, but I take it rather to be some water sliding down the face of a smooth rock, which when the sun at such a time shines upon, the reflection causeth that admirable splendour."*

We saw the mountain in question "partly in glimmer and partly in gloom," the latter element perhaps preponderating, but the luminous crown above alluded to was invisible to our unpoetic

* *Description of the Islands of Orkney*, p. 52.

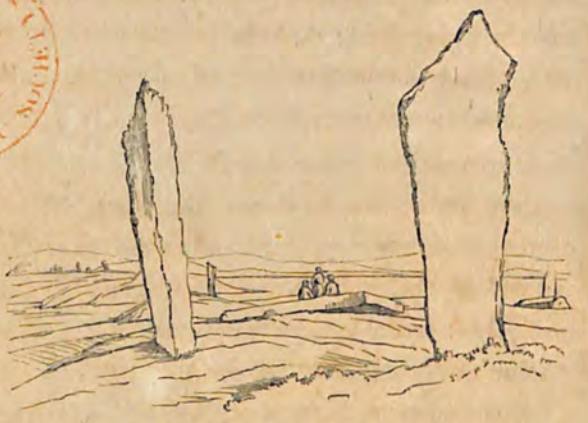
eyes. If it is never seen except when the sun shines on it at midnight, it must be rather a rare phenomenon, but one of the author's observations applies to many an earthly gewgaw besides that Alpine halo,—for who can look back to youth from middle age and say not,—"it hath shin more brightly before than it doth now." This island produces grouse, and some of its western cliffs are the noted haunt of eagles.

As we descended towards the shore we met a group of six or seven young women going to cut rushes with which to make wicks for their lamps, the stranded whales having plentifully supplied the oil. We could discern neither grace nor beauty among these Orcadian damsels. Recrossing to Pomona, we sailed towards the head of Stromness Bay, and landed from the boat at that part of the shore where the stream from the Loch of Stennis discharges itself at low water into the sea. It may be called a salt water river, for at high tide the sea flows up and through its channel into the lower loch, rendering the latter so brackish, that its shores are covered by a dwarfish sea-weed. We joined the road to Kirkwall near the bridge, which seemed a very primitive structure of flag-

stones, with a narrow roadway not more than eight or ten feet wide. Crossing the Kirkwall road we walked towards the flat shores of the lake, and proceeded eastwards along its banks, which are almost entirely cultivated.

The Loch of Stennis is a large though shallow sheet of water, almost divided into two by a green promontory projecting from the north-west, and joined to the southern shore by a rude and probably ancient stone bridge without arches, the water passing between upright piers supporting horizontal flags. These twin lochs are so slightly raised above the medium level of the sea that the tide at high-water floods the lower one, causing the occurrence of numerous flounders within its banks, besides the *ware* already mentioned. During the flow of tide there is also a river-like run of water from the lower to the upper lake at the narrow portion spanned by the bridge of Broigar. It is on the promontory before alluded to, as well as on the nearer shore adjoining to the bridge, that those extraordinary and mysterious remhants of unknown antiquity, commonly called the "Stones of Stennis" raise their grey gigantic heads. They are really very solemn-looking objects, though as nobody knows what they mean,

or for what they were intended, our associations with them are necessarily of a somewhat indefinite nature. There however they stand, in the one case in a vast circle surrounded by a moat and mound, in the other in insulated groups of two or three together, either forming parts of an approach to the main circle, or themselves the sole remnants of other corresponding circles which, in spite of their gigantic size and stony structure, have now almost yielded to the touch of time.



Those near the Kirkwall road, though few in number, are the tallest and largest of the whole, being about eighteen feet in height from the ground, and fixed in the earth by a rather narrow angular base.

Except for their position and peculiar form, they much more resemble natural objects than the unenduring work of human hands, so grey and grizzly are their lichen-covered sides and summits, and so close and compact the growth of the green herbage around their rocky base.* The low and lonely aspect of the country all around also adds greatly to the effect of their impressive nature. There is no other elevated object with which to compare them, the ground itself is green and flat, the very blades of grass look low and *cowering*, and the broad cold surface of the expanded lakes, without the smallest vestige of either shrub or tree, conduces to the domineering influence of the stony giants, and renders them the pervading if not the undisputed spirits of the place. Much dispute has, however, arisen as to their meaning and intent, and probably no great light is thrown upon their actual origin merely by calling them "Druidical monuments,"—for the question still remains and what were *they?* It would not be-

* Our wood-cut does not exhibit this peculiar hoary aspect, and although it represents with sufficient accuracy the form and disposition of the blocks, it does not convey an adequate sense of their size and grandeur.

come us to attempt to draw the sting of controversy from such an unriddled "Sphynx vespiformis," so we content ourselves by simply stating their general character and aspect. None of them is very thick in proportion to its height and breadth, the shape being rather that of an uplifted tabular form, resembling a portion of natural strata raised upright. The summits are generally diagonal, the top of one line of edge being higher than the other, and they seem also in many cases to be imbedded in the earth by a corresponding sloping corner. Their original position was no doubt perpendicular, and many of them are quite so still, although others are leaning to their fall, and not a few are lying flat upon the ground,—affording we doubt not a "house of refuge" for destitute coleoptera, which, however, it might take all the entomologists in Britain to upturn. They are all extremely flat upon their sides, and would be almost smooth but for the thick covering of hoary lichen, which adds such richness to their antique though otherwise sterile beauty.

Although the gigantic remnants near the Kirkwall road are too few in number to indicate the circular form, yet that character is sufficiently manifested by the distinct traces of a large green

mound in which they are enclosed, and of which almost a continuous semicircle is yet apparent, the other segment having been ploughed up in the course of agricultural operations and improvements, and bearing at the period of our visit a not very luxuriant crop of oats.* One of the largest of these stones now lies flat upon the ground, having been loosened it is said by the action of the plough, and soon after blown over by a gale of wind. A little bare-headed shoeless boy, watching a flock of nibbling geese, was sitting upon it when we approached. We asked him if he knew anything of the history of these stones. He said they were brought there from a distance long ago by the *mytes*, but who these mytes were he could not say, but rather thought they were "a kind o' speerits." We think that none of our inquiries or researches elsewhere educed a more reasonable answer.

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* It may be that the form was never more than *semi-circular* from the first, and that this temple, in connection with the most ancient system of religious worship in the north, was dedicated to the moon—the more perfect circular range, to be afterwards described, being devoted to the sun. See Dr. HIBBERT's learned Dissertation in the *Transactions* of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries, Vol. iii., Part I.

Close to either side of the southern end of the bridge which leads across to the northern promontory stands a great sentinel stone, as if the remains of a gateway or barrier. On the top of one of these a beautiful pair of linnets sat twittering and preening, secure as they thought upon almost the loftiest elevation which the neighbourhood afforded, and of course we did nothing to scare them from their stony height. They seemed quite tame, and very cheerful, as linnets are wont to be. We could see their little sparkling eyes and sharpened beaks, and we thought of our own linties at home, and of the door at which they hang in sunny days, and of all that there go in and out, and for a time the dread worship of the Druids, and the cruel sacrifices of the sons of Odin, and the fierce contentions of the Sea-Kings, and even the actual presence of these mystical symbols of "the unknown God," all faded from our view; and we could see a low-roofed cottage, with leafy windows and an intertwining porch, and numerous shrubs and trees, and winding walks and many coloured wreaths of "bright consummate flowers," and human hearts affectionate and true, and we blessed God for all his mercies.

Several of the stones both here and onwards at

the northern circle have been wantonly or unfeelingly destroyed. For example, that to which Sir Walter Scott alludes, as distinguished by a hole or perforation, through which lovers were wont to plight their troth even in Christian days though in the name of Woden, has been broken into fragments. We could perceive a very large Ting-wall or Court-hill, about a mile to the eastward, near a kirk, and in the midst of a sheet of cultivation.

Crossing the narrow portion of the lake by the bridge before mentioned, we proceeded to the northern promontory on which the completer and more magnificent circle of the so-called " Stones of Stennis " stands. Individually none of these is so large or lofty as those we had already passed, but they are ranged upon the higher portion of a slight elevation of the land, and as you approach them you pass here and there a solitary stone or broken remnant, as if there had been something of a connecting range or approach, all the way from the bridge to the great circle. The latter is encompassed by a still entire mound, surrounded by a foss, and there is a filling up of the foss and a lowering of the mound, just at two entrance places, opposite each other, north and south. The stones

stand very near the mound, so that there is a large circular interior space, probably about 400 feet in diameter. The stones, judging from such as still stand at equal intervals without any intermediate broken remnant, seem to have been placed at pretty regular distances of about sixteen feet from each other. There are now large portions of the circle without any stones at all, but even there you do not fail to trace either slight hollows into which they were probably once inserted, or hard grass covered hummocks composed of lumps of subterranean stone, the basal portion of what either ruthless time, or the irreverent hands of a more recent dyke-building generation have levelled with the dust. Besides these there are many very obvious half and quarter stones, and several others lying on their backs disconsolate, all in the regular bend of the circle. Of the larger stones, whether upright or fallen, there are I think about thirty-four, without counting stumps, or places where it is obvious stones have been, and altogether they form a very solemn though somewhat ghastly congregation.

Several artificially shaped laws or hillocks are visible around the circle at different distances.

The site also commands a fine view of the loch, especially its north-eastern portion, towards which the stone-encinctured plain, though levelled by art, shows a natural inclination. This immense Orcadian Stonehenge, much more magnificent than that of Clava, on the Nairn, is probably inferior only to that of Salisbury plain. It is unquestionably of northern or Scandinavian origin, and this fact, combined with the existence of so many monuments of a similar nature, though minor order, in different parts of the north of Scotland, would seem to indicate that the worship and religious usages of the Norsemen were of the same general character as those of the Druids.

We did not angle in the Loch of Stennis. Common fresh-water trout occur at least in its upper basin, although even there the water must at times be somewhat brackish. At the time we examined the stream of junction, although from the state of the tide the water must have been still ebbing from the foot of the lower loch into the sea, yet the connecting current was running from the head of that portion upwards to the higher loch. We could only account for this

by the strong breeze which was blowing in that direction, and which we presume must have impressed a corresponding *set* upon the liquid mass below. Just before crossing the last fence of the cultivated ground, previous to entering on the wilder pasture that surrounds the great circle, and its low green mounds, we found a boy busy baiting the hooks of a long set-line for trouts, with cut portions of eel. He said he seldom caught any big ones, and would sometimes find about a dozen fish on his line, which he usually set in eight or ten feet water. We took an angular course in a boat across the loch, and had then about three miles walking to Stromness.

The day was now far spent, and as we had been at work in various ways for about fourteen hours, we thought the town of Stromness one of the longest we had ever walked through since we left Kirkaldy. Its main street is narrow and tortuous, and two people might almost shake hands from opposite houses. Most of the dwellings have an antiquated air, though that of Mr. Beatson, banker, has a pleasant and more cheerful aspect, with a garden inclining to the sea, and adorned with fruit and forest trees (ashes, elms,

&c.) in a thriving state. The population of the town of Stromness is nearly 2300, besides about 760 inhabitants of the landward portion of the parish. The harbour is safe and commodious, and is much frequented both by coasting vessels and those connected with foreign trade. The higher grounds above the town protect it from the western winds, which often blow with great violence, while a couple of small islands increase the shelter of the eastern side. We were well pleased to find ourselves on board the Princess Royal (and dinner ready) by nine o'clock.

On the morning of the 19th of August we set sail for Shetland, by the western passage from Stromness, called Hoy Sound. We ran down a little towards the south-west to obtain a better view of the fine precipitous eagle-haunted face of Hoy-Head, with the perpendicular columnar rock called the Old Man of Hoy, for whom we thought it our duty to enquire. He was quite well, though somewhat weather-beaten, and rather cold about the feet. The mountainous mass of Hoy is about 1600 feet in height, and had a fine effect upheaving its giant bulk between us and the morning sun. We had also during our onward pro-

gress a commanding view of the whole outer coast of Pomona trending northwards, cliffy, but of no great height. The wind was in our favour as soon as we had passed the Sound, but the breeze was strong, with a heavy swell, so we kept well away from the coast in the belief that rocks are harder than timber, and that it is by no means advisable to geologise upon a lee shore.

We plied our way northwards all day long, with vigorous and most unwearied wings, passing along the entire western line of the mainland of Orkney, and enjoying more distant views of Rousay, Westray, and other islands. We struck somewhat more easterly towards evening, and as day declined could just perceive from time to time like a star of the first magnitude, touching the edge of ocean's liquid plain, the revolving light of Start Point, on the north-eastern promontory of the distant Isle of Sanday. We had all this day a very high and heavy sea, being exposed to the unimpeded rolling swell of the great Atlantic waters, and were in consequence not at all times sufficiently impressed with a sense of *pleasure* in contemplating the grandeur of the mighty deep. Indeed, we never saw higher or more powerful-

looking waves. Two large schooners passed us going southwards, and though they were but a short way off, each angry mountain as it heaved between us hid their topmasts from our view. But the gale was a free one, for our onward course, and the Cutter carried her square sail gallantly. Although our own gentle spirit was at times subdued, we rallied ever and anon, and finally enjoyed a splendid sunset in the ocean, just as the far eastern islands were fading from our view.

At an early hour on the morning of the 20th, (having previously passed the Fair Isle to our right), we found ourselves within view of Fitful Head in Shetland, a portion of the country now immortalised, as so many more localities have been, by Walter Scott. In the far north-western distance, we could discern the blue mountains of the lonely Foula,—the St. Kilda of the Shetland group. The Cutter had been pitching pretty considerably all night, with now and then a heavy roll of great discomfiture, and this unruly state of matters was not much mended by our now entering Sumburgh Roost, a most tortuous turmoil of water, which beats the Pentland Firth

hollow. When informed by the Captain that we were off Sumburgh Head, the Secretary, in spite of some tremendous lurches, made his way to the foot of the companion stairs, the higher portion of which he found blocked by the body of Jack, the cabin servant, who immediately removed himself upwards. At this moment a heavy sea struck the Cutter on her weather quarter, and went right over her. The shock made her lurch so to leeward that an immense surge came right over the lee gunwale, unceremoniously meeting the Secretary in the face, and washing the aforesaid Jack off his legs. Meanwhile there was a corresponding row below. For ourself, knowing that we could in no way alter or amend the state of matters either by speech or action, we continued in a state of complacent, or at least uncomplaining repose. But an acquaintance in the after-cabin, connected with the fishery service, became alarmed by the concussions which were taking place around. He was just about to spring from his berth, when unfortunately a large bag of potatoes, which had been somewhat hastily stowed away in his too near neighbourhood, suddenly opened its mouth, and after gaping at him for a couple of seconds,

discharged its entire contents with angry violence on his unoffending person. However, he extricated himself with inconceivable rapidity, and made his appearance in dishabille to enquire into the cause of such contentious doings.

> "He tax'd not you, ye elements, with unkindness;
> He never gave you kingdoms, called ye daughters."

But he thought that Jack ought to have turned the key of the potatoe store. We ourselves, inhabiting the main cabin, escaped with a bottle of ink upon the bed clothes, while Mackenzie's Charts, an excellent work in three volumes elephant folio, flew across the cabin like so many butterflies, but fortunately falling rather short of our position, made harmless obeisance at our feet. It is possible that the sea would not have been shipped had the man at the helm manœuvred more skilfully, but at the same time we would strongly advise all those who desire to prolong the peaceful pleasure of a morning nap, to avoid perching in Sumburgh Roost.

In spite, however, of these marine *desagremens*, we could not help admiring the magnificent view of Sumburgh Head, with its bold and shivered front, and gleaming light-house on its lofty crest.

Then there was Scat Ness, Cross Island, and Quendal Bay (in the latter the ruins of Yarlshoff, and an old churchyard, with bones bleaching in the drifted sand), and towering over all, the giant form of Fitful Head,—while the sea was heaving in mimic mountains all around us, or breaking tumultuously along the rock-bound shore in sparkling lengthened lines of snowy whiteness, which momentarily veiled those dark cavernous cliffs on which the raging waters waged perpetual war,—

> "Like billows on the solitary shore,
> Where baffled wave to baffled wave succeeds,
> Spurn'd by the sullen rocks with sullen roar,
> And rising, falling, foaming evermore,
> To rise, and fall, and roar, and foam in vain."

Yet a tranquil pearly mist hung over the higher grounds, softening their solemn gloom, and increasing the contrast which the still austerity of the upper regions naturally presented to the many-voiced and ceaseless motions of the surge below.

Our pilot, however, seemed averse to attempt a run to Scalloway, or any haven of the west of Shetland with such a sea, and with weather so deficient in steady clearness, so we accordingly altered our course, and ran away for Lerwick on

the eastern main. The most southern portion of Shetland forms the parish of Dunrossness. It is fertile in the production of bear and black oats, and yields respectable potatoes. It appears, however, that some of the land is scarcely more stable than the surrounding sea. "There has happened," says the minister, "a very heavy loss in this parish, of a snug estate that belonged to Alexander Sinclair, Esq. of Brow, all the most valuable part thereof having been blown over with sand, and only some small patches called outsets or pendicles now remaining." A snug estate, indeed! "A part of the estate of Sumburgh which was surrounded with sand, like an oasis in a desert, and which carried a good flock of sheep, is now also so much overspread with sand, that it has not one upon it; and a little inlet, which could formerly admit small craft, is now filling up very fast by sand blowing from the waste." There is a great want of peat in the parish.

The views while we passed round Sumburgh Head were fine from all points. We soon crossed the mouth of the "Pool," backed by a low and cultivated country. Then came a portion of coast into which several voes or creeks open

among the rocks, succeeded by the projecting points of Clumley and Cumla Ness. We next took our course outside the island of Mousa, and standing towards the bold and rocky cliffs of Bressay, we had a fine view of Noss Island, which lies upon its eastern shore. Then entering Bressay Sound, and running into the narrows which separate that island from the mainland of Shetland, we speedily found ourselves in the fine land-locked Bay of Lerwick, where instantaneously recovering from the turmoil of the unquiet Roost, we made a very sincere breakfast on fresh herrings and fried ham and eggs. We also cast anchor.

We had scarcely performed the two important duties last alluded to, when we received a visit on board the Cutter from Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie, who kindly came to offer their services to the Secretary and ourself during our brief sojourn in Shetland. This was no vain show of courtesy, as we afterwards experienced, and we take this opportunity to thank these gentlemen for many friendly attentions. We did not leave the Princess Royal this day.

The fishery-officer came on board on business.

The herring fishery of Shetland has been by no means successful during recent years, that is to say, it has declined since 1834, in which season, however, there was a take of 50,000 barrels. Some have thought it might prove advantageous that practised fishermen from the mainland of Scotland should settle here with a view to instruct the natives in the best mode of prosecuting the herring fishery. "It may be doubted," says Mr. Cheyne, "if the Zetland fishermen yet understand the habits of the herring, or the best way of looking out for them; and it is matter of wonder that greater exertions to procure some of the experienced fishermen from Scotland to follow the herring fishing in Zetland have not been made."* It may also be doubted whether such general knowledge of their habits is possessed by any one as would prove advantageous in a district with which the individuals were not locally acquainted, and we fear that even a skilful captor from the Caithness coast might find himself somewhat "at sea," if desired in a general way to catch herrings in Shetland, without previous experience.

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 5.

Many sloops from Lerwick engage during summer in the cod fishery, which usually terminates about the 12th of August, just before that for herrings is commenced. The ling fishery, so important to Shetland in general, is but sparingly pursued by the Lerwick boats.

The 21st of August was a dark and doubtful day. A nephew of Mr. Ogilvie waited on us in the character of an angler, and volunteered to introduce us to the Shetland lochs, being himself conversant in the finny resources of his native island. So we fixed to go a fishing that same day. We landed in Lerwick after breakfast. The houses stand with tall gable ends towards the sea, which many of them overhang in such a way that the very cook maids could catch podlies from their kitchen windows. There are many small private piers, quays, slips, and jetties, which lead by short narrow lanes between the houses to the principal street, which is so curved and irregular that you seldom see your way onwards above a few yards. From this street other irregular lanes lead upwards among other houses towards some higher ground above the town, and this is the "total of the whole." There is also,

by the bye, a Dutch-toy-looking town-house, and a more venerable fort, originally built by Oliver Cromwell. The latter now serves both as a prison and a court of justice.

We found ponies ready saddled, and suited to each capacity, awaiting our arrival, and Mr. Hay, the Secretary, and ourself, accompanied by a running footman carrying our rod and basket, set off towards Laxfirth, a property of the first named. The country around Lerwick is considerably barren, the site of the city having probably been chosen rather on account of its excellent harbourage than from any other advantages yielded by the surrounding district. As you advance into this portion of the interior, things get worse and worse. You at first rather descend from the higher ground above the town into a low flat piece of land, with a fresh-water loch on one side (containing an island, and the remnants of a Pictish tower) and a small sea-bay on the other. You then ascend among barren hills, and wind your way through a dreary upland portion consisting of a vast peat moss all as black as ink, the surface having been long ago paired off, and nothing re-

maining but the dark deep beds of peat, with long dykes of the same material resulting from the dismal perpendicular sides of the hags.* You then begin after a time to wind down again into a better country, and after a ride of five or six miles from Lerwick we came to a small piece of fresh water, called the Strand Loch, almost connected with the sea. Here of course we stopped. "The force of nature could no farther go," so leaving the Secretary and Mr. Hay to proceed upon their journey, we took our rod in hand, and walked into the loch. We had been previously joined by our angling cicerone, Mr. Charles Duncan. There were fewer sea-trout up the loch

* Mr. Hay remarked, that although he cannot pretend to praise the Shetlanders for their excellence in other matters of manual dexterity or labour, they are nowhere to be matched for peat cutting. The instrument they use is a long spade with turned up edges, so that when it is forced down by the foot it shaves out a long peat with the greatest neatness from the face of the bog; and without a hand being applied the cutter turns it out of the instrument, and at one operation builds it into its place upon the bank in the most symmetrical manner, where it remains until dry and fit for being carried home. This work he continues for a length of time, with astonishing rapidity.

than we expected, and it soon began to rain in torrents. However, as we were nearly under water at any rate the pluvial moisture scarcely reached us. We found wading in this loch rather disagreeable, owing to the quantity of subjacent mud, which was so thick and soft that if one stood for more than half a minute on the same spot he would find himself sticking so steadfastly to mother-earth as to be almost unable to withdraw his hind-legs. There was also a quantity of weeds, but certainly of the most harmless and accommodating kind we ever met with. The largest trout lie just on the outside, that is beyond these weeds, and owing to the full state of the loch it required deepish wading, an off-shore wind, a long rod, a strong hand, and a straight cast, to induce your grizzly kings and green mantles to fly so far.* We were just able to touch the point desired and no more, and had once or twice nearly floundered full length into

* The reader unacquainted with Waltonian art need not be alarmed,—the above names do not indicate either fairies or fiercer beings,—but are merely the names of certain artificial flies.—See *The Rod and the Gun*,—fly leaf.

the loch, by giving our arms and body somewhat of the onward walking swing, before we had clearly ascertained that our legs, instead of being removeable at pleasure, were sticking in the mud. However, by afterwards always keeping our feet in motion, like Wordsworth's leech-gatherer,—

> "with gentle pace
> Along the margin of that moorish flood,"

we eventually contrived to kill two dozen of trouts, savé one. Of these the largest, a fine fresh run lively sea-trout of about three pounds, the instant he felt the hook within his jaws, instead of making off darted directly towards us, apparently less in fear than anger. We thought at first he would attack us, but on seeing our calm determination to abide the onset, he suddenly wheeled about and kept careering through the weeds in steady semicircles, the reel running out as if it took him for a grilse. As we were fishing, not very prudently (under existing circumstances), with three flies, our wonder was that the two which were out of work did not hold on by the weeds so as to rescue their companion from salmo trutta's jaws. But these weeds were all

of such a soft and slimy texture, with a hold so untenacious on the ground, that they either bent to one side or came up by the root as the fish pressed through them, with frequent flashings of a pearly lustre, followed by two outriders in the shape of a red professor and the aforesaid grizzly king. Green mantle, in her own quiet way, was sticking to his tongue. We took some little time to land our friend, but at length he came leisurely ashore, with a quantity of the yielding weed adhering to both himself and line. With the exception of a couple of others about or above a pound, the rest were fish of small size. As soon as we had finished fishing we handed over our rods and baskets to an attendant, and Mr. Duncan and ourself scampered homewards to Mr. Hay's on poney-back as hard as eight legs could carry us. It was raining in torrents, and some portions of what was called the road bore in our eyes a wild precarious aspect. But the Shetland ponies are proverbially sure-footed, and they knew their way.

Meanwhile, the Secretary, under the guidance of Mr. Hay, proceeded along a portion of the country to the northward of the Laxfirth. Not-

withstanding the signification of this Danish name (Salmon Firth) it seems more than doubtful that salmon occur at all in Shetland. Sea-trout, however, of large size are very abundant, and it may be that the popular use and application of the northern term of lax may have been somewhat indefinitely applied to the migratory or sea-going salmonidæ in general, without restriction to *salmo salar*. The district just referred to has been much and most judiciously improved by Mr. Hay. The small farmers were formerly in use to occupy only a few acres near their dwelling-houses for crop, and made little or nothing of the forty or fifty acres of outfield of which their possession consisted. It is known among them that bear had been grown upon the same patch for perhaps a hundred years successively, and this they managed by scarifying other parts of the ground, and renovating the arable patch by spreading it over the surface. Now, Mr. Hay's plan is thoroughly to drain, lime, and otherwise improve a field, (he has lime upon the ground), and then he gives over to a tenant perhaps ten acres enclosed in one square piece, with a good cottage, barn, and byre. This portion of land he com-

pels them to divide into five lengthened stripes, one being in oats, another potatoes, a third barley and grass seeds, a fourth hay, and a fifth pasture, the last being broken up again for oats, and so on. The people are beginning to see the advantage of this rotation, and to find out that they make much more of these small possessions under such a mode of culture than they did of four times the extent in former times. The land in this way yields in rent about £1 an acre. There is a quay built for the sake of landing manure from Lerwick.*

We were still in the water, rod in hand, when the Secretary and Mr. Hay returned from the Strand Loch. They were busy with their own affairs, and so were we with ours, so we merely requested them not to ride over our three-pounder, which for want of a basket near at hand we had left extended on the road. It was raining in a most Noah's-ark like manner, but they proceeded southwards through the valley towards Scalloway, taking shelter for a time beneath a cottage roof. The interior was large, roomy, and quite clean,—

* Sir T. D. L.'s *MS. Journal*, p. 96.

the fire at one end, beneath a chimney,—a small box-bed, with several chairs and *kists*,—and an inner apartment of the nature and contents of which "our informant knoweth not." A number of dog-fish were hanging, for the sake of being smoked, on strings. Though rejected as food along a large portion of the Scottish coasts, some say that when thus prepared they afford a rich and palatable food. We were never fond of sharks even in our youth. The inmates of this cottage were an old woman and her daughter, of the name of Petrie. The men were engaged in the sea-fishing. It is said that the Shetlanders generally give up all to their children when the latter are old enough to maintain themselves, and the consequence is, that as the devotion of the parent knows no bounds the children are apt to become selfish and inconsiderate, and it is in this way that some account for the alleged fact (whether true or not we cannot say) of the frequent indifference of Shetlanders who have made money abroad, to the wants of those at home. Our friends proceeded on by Tingwall, where a poor modern church has been erected in place of an ancient Gothic one, with fine old tower, pulled

down. In the church-yard is the vaulted burial place of the Nicholsons, with a Gothic entrance. They saw the minister for a moment, a fine old hospitable man, severely tried of late by a deep domestic calamity.

The Tingwall hillock in the loch is connected with the land by an ancient causeway, and Mr. Hay's lands hereabouts are freed from *scat*-duties as a compensation for the damage they were supposed to sustain from the numerous horses of those who in ancient times came hither to attend the Tingwall courts. The judges sat upon the mount, and the people ranged themselves along the opposing semicircular shore. We shall speak about the trouts another time.

The Secretary and his agreeable companion advanced to Scalloway, proceeding by the side of the fresh-water loch. The *Senecio palustris* is the most common weed, and it is destructively prevalent. The same perennial red clover was observable as seen in Barra. Mr. Hay informed us that a permanent native rye grass has also been discovered, which is found to make beautiful pasture when cultivated. An upright monumental stone was passed upon a ridge between the two

Tingwall Lochs. The people were observed using their peculiar short straight-bladed long-handled scythes, with which they seem to do good execution on the grass. The descent upon Scalloway from a low ridge of primitive limestone presents a striking view, with its fine old castle, numerous boats and shipping, and the quiet bay encompassed by rugged but protecting points, and guarded in the offing by numerous islands. As we shall have occasion to visit Scalloway in the course of our progress along the western shores of Shetland, we shall leave its praises unsung for the present. We all met at Mr. Hay's to dinner in the evening, and there enjoyed ourselves considerably, after hanging up our truly "humida vestimenta" to the powerful god of the sea.

While preparing to return in reasonable time (as it was Saturday night) on board the Cutter in Lerwick Bay, we were dazzled by a vivid flash of lightning, a loud long rolling peal of thunder followed, the rain came down with the denseness of a water-spout, while murky clouds had converted an autumnal northern night into one of utter darkness. However, in spite of sincere entreaty to the contrary, we left our hospitable friends, and

as some of the party knew the way even with their eyes shut, we had no difficulty in gaining Lerwick. Meanwhile, the thunder growled and rolled around us, and flash after flash the lightning threw its instantaneous glare, uplifting as it were a curtain of thick darkness, which in a moment closed with denser deeper folds. In descending a narrow lane or street of Lerwick there was such a rush of rain-water careering up our ancles that we really expected at one time to have been carried away, but we cunningly turned round a corner, and left the torrent to proceed in solitude though not in silence. Parting convoy with such of our friends as had accompanied us, we got on board our boat from a convenient jetty, and passing over the surface of the dark waters, still from time to time illumined by fitful flashes, we found ourselves on board the Princess Royal.

Sunday the 22d August was a clear and sparkling day, as if the thunder storm of the preceding night had dissolved and dissipated all murky vapours. We have indeed observed a good deal of this alternate weather in the northern isles, having frequently had about as bad a day as could be picked out of the year, followed by

another beautified by cloudless ether. We went ashore to church, though not in the morning, for although we certainly rose in time, yet we either misconceived the proper hour, or our watches did not agree with the Lerwick clock. We remained with Mr. Ogilvie to dinner. Among other good things he gave us fresh tusk, one of the best fishes, in that condition, we ever devoured. We were also presented with a roasted pea-fowl, a practice of which we disapprove, that bird being, though not otherwise like the ghost of Hamlet's father, "a creature too majestical to offer it even the show of violence." The clergyman (Rev. Mr. Barclay) is we believe an excellent scholar, accomplished in the Danish and Icelandic tongues, and deeply versed in the history of the Northern nations. We agree with him in thinking that the authentic historical details of many most important early periods, not only of Shetland and Orkney, but also of Scottish times, remain yet to be written among the ancient national records and great public libraries of Copenhagen. We well remember, while once upon a time residing in the learned capital of Denmark, hearing a similar sentiment expressed by Professors Thorlacius

and Olaus Muller, and coincided in by the great Norse antiquary Phin Magnussen. We returned to the Cutter at an early hour. It may be presumed that thunder-storms are rare in Shetland, as we were informed that the by no means extraordinary turmoil of last night was about the severest that had been experienced in this quarter since the year 1797.

Monday the 23d was again moist and murky. However, we went ashore to look about us. We were informed that so many men go to sea, and leave these islands in various ways, that there are now 17,000 of the fair sex to 13,000 of the other. This is a melancholy state of affairs for a people in no way addicted to nunneries. Shops are numerous in Lerwick, though few of them have signs, or other outward emblems, and so do not catch the stranger's eye. We bought a few woollen articles (worsted shawls, gloves, and stockings, being famous here) and then walked down to Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie's great stores, building-yard, and curing-houses at Freefield. This seemed an immense concern, containing within itself the means and materials of every kind of work, and rather resembled a small self-

contained colony than a private establishment, so numerous and complete are its docks and harbours, ships, quays, and other commercial conveniences. The cooperage department is immense, as may be judged from the fact of there not being less than 45,000 herring barrels in store here. This, unless in the event of an abundant fishery, will prove a heavy stock in hand. Their machine for bending hoops is a simple but perfect instrument, invented, as we understand, by one of their own people. It has a large grooved roller, working upon smaller cylinders covered with leather. (Our notes are here illegible in consequence of our having no turn for mechanics.) We found the natives curing and packing a small quantity of Saturday morning's take. Some of the early cured herrings we opened for inspection were excellent. We saw a large vessel of 250 or 300 tons upon the stocks. Visited the boat-building yard, and the place where the nets were tanned. A strong decoction of oak bark is made in a great boiler, and the net placed in a barrel is immersed in the liquid, covered up and allowed to steep, the operation being more than once performed. They seem not yet to have tried Kyan's patent in this quarter.

One of the head workmen (who answers to the name of John Smith) has constructed some beautiful and ingenious tools which may be called circular-working planes, for giving the edges to the ends of barrels, and working out the groove in the cask for receiving them. These are by far the nicest operations which the cooper has to perform, and yet with the instrument just referred to he might work with a handkerchief over his eyes. We saw a large store full of the component parts of Norway skiffs, brought from abroad, and all numbered in such a way that they could be put into a sea-worthy form in a very short period. We adjourned to John Smith's house to see some curious trunks, boxes, dressing-cases, &c. which he constructs during his leisure hours, of wood brought round in a circular or hoop-shaped fashion, finely stained and polished, and neatly strengthened by connecting brass-work.

On our return we passed the old garrison, meeting on our way thither droves of women proceeding on their never-ceasing journey to the mosses in the hills for peats, with their cassies or straw baskets on their backs, and knitting eagerly with both their hands. The garrison stands upon a

rising ground to the north-westward of the town, on the site of a fort formed by Cromwell. The summit of another rising ground was also a fort of the old Roundhead's, and its site is superior. The walls of the modern Fort Charlotte are provided with some innocent thirty-two pounders, and the barracks, now partly occupied as the prison and county rooms, partly as a store for herring barrels, are commodious. The present force consists of a solitary gunner. We were afterwards joined by the sheriff, and getting on board our boat at Lerwick, we took the net, and proceeding to the bight of a more northern bay, tried an hour's scringing for sea-trout. We got only a couple, with a good many small crabs, and some curious marine productions. The people were packing herrings, and we inspected some cured cod and skate. The latter is said to be excellent, though not much known in the south.

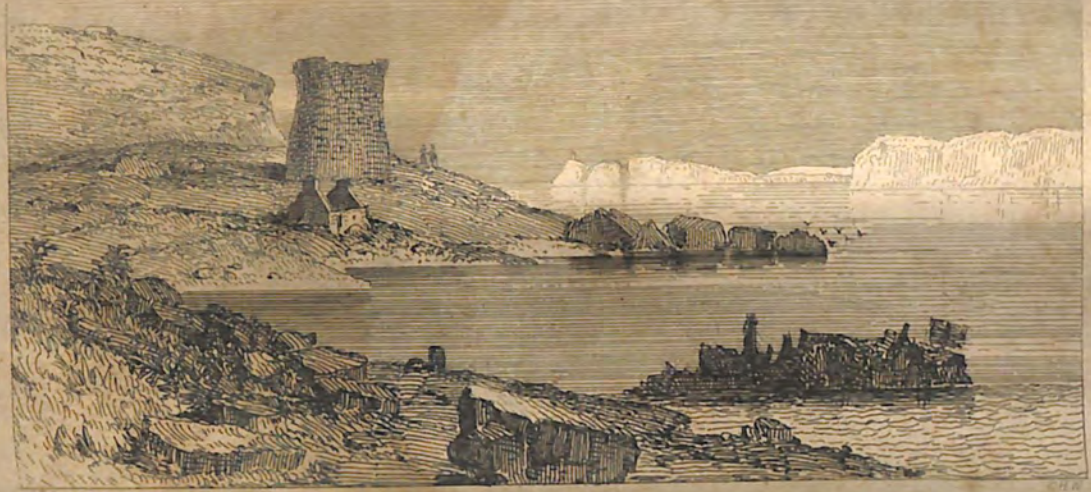
The morning of the 24th was again bright and fair. We made this day (without bidding a final adieu to Lerwick) a short excursion to the more southern island of Mousa, and afterwards to that of Noss. Having been joined soon after breakfast by a majority of our newly acquired Lerwick

friends, we took our course southwards, skirting the western shores of Bressay. A singular occurrence took place some years ago on the bold south coast of the last-named island. There is a slate quarry there, and the workmen had occasion to descend a perpendicular cliffy portion by means of a ladder. A sudden and violent storm came on in the evening which drove the labourers from their work. The night was dark and tempestuous, and a ship drove a-shore close upon the quarry cliff. Had she struck elsewhere in the neighbourhood, every soul on board must have perished instantly, but no sooner did she come in terrific contact with the cliff than the grateful though astounded seamen in the rigging found a ladder ready placed, and by it they mounted, and were saved. The unfortunate wife of the captain had been previously drowned in the cabin. Next morning there was scarcely a vestige of the vessel to be seen.

Bressay is about six miles in length, with a varying breadth from two to three. It sends above a dozen boats (of from eighteen to twenty feet keel) to the capture of ling, called the haaf or far fishing. Each boat carries about fifty bughts or

lines,—a bught being a length of fifty fathoms. They proceed far to the eastward, till they sometimes lose the sight of land. They receive from their employers about 6s. 6d. per cwt. of wet ling, and 4s. 6d. for the same weight of tusk and cod. The Bressay ling fishing is supposed to average about seventy cwt. to each boat in a season. The cod fishing is prosecuted chiefly to the westward, beyond the main, in small sloops of from fifteen to twenty ton. Each sloop may take in a season from four to ten ton. This fishery begins about Whitsunday, and on its conclusion in the month of August that of herrings is commenced. The ground for the latter lies within from two to four miles from land. The success has been extremely various within the range of these last few years. Last season the average of the Bressay boats was about seventy-six crans.

The propelling air became light as we proceeded, but the day was beautiful as we passed through Mousa Sound, and viewed the opening into Sandwick Bay upon the Shetland main. This bay is rocky towards its outward horns, but flat and low within its centre, near which stands Sandwick Lodge, the residence of Mr. Bruce of Sumburgh.



The rocks of Mousa are rather picturesque than lofty. Some low dark ledges projecting from the sea, were garrisoned by troops of cormorants, ranged in lengthened lines, with outstretched waving wings. The island itself exhibits a good rich surface of grass.

The Pictish tower or burgh of Mousa, well known as the finest and most entire example in existence of that peculiar and very ancient style of structure, stands imposingly on a green and swelling slope, immediately above some lowish rocks. On the summit of a cliff of the opposing mainland are the more dilapidated ruins of Castle Burland, another specimen of a similar kind of work. We believe the origin and design of these erections are involved in darkness, although they perhaps derive additional interest from their mysterious nature and remote antiquity. They are at the same time among the least picturesque of any ancient buildings we have seen. Mr. Barclay thinks that these towers were the strongholds of a pirate race. In the meantime they rather resemble glass-works, with a portion of the top knocked off, than places of defence in days of danger. The walls are double, without external

windows, and there is only a single door, both low and narrow. A peculiar character of these buildings seems the restriction towards the middle portion, and the overhanging of the summit. This architectural feature is scarcely discernible in any other burgh than that in question, owing to those elsewhere having now lost so much of their higher portion. We think even that of Mousa has lost its summit. The way to the top is by a kind of rough irregular winding stair or passage between the walls, which in its way threads a series of small galleries (in this instance, about seven in number) rising one above another, and lighted, though obscurely, from within, by tiers of square holes opening into the interior court. The latter is entirely open from above. There is one entrance to the stair from the ground, and another towards what may be called the second storey. We made our darkling way upwards, and took the circuit of the highest gallery, in doing which we were compelled to drop upon our hands and knees. This building is composed of lengthened shallow stones of a slaty flag, entirely without mortar or cement, so that the daylight now penetrates inwards from without in several places, and

may have done so from the first. These double walls occupy a space of from thirteen to fifteen feet in thickness, which leaves for the smallest diameter of each five feet, and three for that of the circular galleries between. The general diameter of the building, walls included, is about fifty feet. We did not take the height, but we think Dr. Hilbert Ware states the outer elevation at fifty feet. The view from the summit of the walls is very fine.

Remnants of many of these burghs exist both in Shetland and the Scottish main, and it is said that each is within sight of its nearest neighbour, so as to form a lengthened and connecting chain. "It is probable," says Mr. Beith, in reference to the towers of Glenelg, "that the dwelling-houses of the inhabitants, in the troublous times which gave origin to the structures which we have attempted to describe, were erected close by the *burghs* or *dunes*, and that when the lighting of the beacons on the neighbouring mountains gave intimation of the approach of an enemy, or his descent upon the coast, they forsook their habitations, conveyed their moveable property, with provisions, within the walls of the fortress, if not

always kept there, and having previously driven their cattle off from the coast, or dispersed them over the mountains, awaited the event, or prepared for defence. The protection afforded by such strongholds, usually built upon eminences, must have been considerable. The galleries described above, provided perfect shelter for women and children from arrows and other missiles which might be thrown into the fort, for they do not seem to have been roofed over. The form of the *dune* precluded the prospect of capture by scaling, whilst from the summit, where from the projecting stones which remain it is evident there must have been some description of platform, the besieged could hurl destruction on the enemy who, either by this means or the battering-ram, sought their ruin. From the construction of the castles, and the nature of the assaults made by the predatory adventurers for defence against whom they were intended, it must have seldom occurred that they were taken by an enemy unless by surprise. The generally received opinion of their origin is, that they were not the workmanship of any purely Celtic tribe, there being many circumstances to render it probable that they were erected by the

Danes or Norwegians." There is no trace in the interior of any holes for joisting or divisions of any kind, so that they seem never to have consisted of more (except the galleries) than a single hollow hall of great height, and open from top to bottom. But whether they were watch-towers, or the abodes of ancient pirates, or only places of occasional defence in times of trouble, we find ourselves incompetent to say. The period of their erection is believed to be at least anterior to the eighth century.

Rejoining the Cutter, we proceeded into Sandwick Bay. A judiciously planned and well constructed pier would here form a useful harbourage. A good many boats were assembled, and herring curing was carrying on along shore. On landing we were received and kindly welcomed by Mr. Bruce, and spent a few minutes pleasantly in a handsomely furnished drawing-room, filled with rosy children, sofas, and sofa-tables, musical instruments, plenty of books, and thick soft carpets, massy hearth-rugs, and a blazing fire. Such combinations of domestic comfort and elegance are pleasing every where to all men, and more especially so to those who have long sojourned on the

perilous and unstable deep. It is a wise plan in Shetland to make stone walls do the work of trees and hedge-rows. The effect here of a little square piece of pleasure-ground before the house was excellent. By means of steps, and walks, and terra-cotta vases (which seem to stand the winter well), our associations were actually Italianised, while creepers and shrubby plants, and a few of the hardier flowers lent their aid to ornament the scene. There is a wide sheet of cultivation spread up the flat valley, and over the sides of the hills in the vicinity of Sandwick Lodge.

As we quitted Mousa Sound, Aith's Voe was shown us. It seemed a sandy inlet, with a narrow entrance between rocks which are continuous along the coast of Cunningsburgh on both sides. About seven or eight years ago, a large American vessel, quite a stranger to the coast, came into the southern entrance of the Sound of Mousa, mistaking it for Bressay Sound, and seeing no opening onwards but the voe between the rocks, they made right for it, and although there was a reef or bar seven feet less in depth than their actual draught of water, they were carried over it by the surge (with only a slight grazing), and the

vessel was safely landed in the voe. She was afterwards purchased by Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie. We have told the reader how she got in. How she got out he must discover for himself.

We were soon after this almost totally becalmed, but the sun was shining brightly, and the evening was serene and beautiful. A gentle breeze then springing up, we were wafted on our return towards the bold southern coast of Bressay, terminated by Ordhead to the west and Bardhead to the east, and presenting a picturesque range of cliffs. The inner or western shore of that island, as seen from the Lerwick side, is green, pleasing, pasture-covered, but not particularly picturesque or imposing. We ran into the Sound of Noss, and after dinner the whole party landed on that island, taking it on the western side, from which the ground rises in a tolerably steep but regular smooth grassy slope, till it terminates in the abrupt cliff of Noss Head to the eastwards. This terminal summit, entirely precipitous to the seaward side, must be about 600 feet in height, no great elevation certainly, but impressive from its insular position, and sudden descent. The rock seemed an extremely indurated old red sandstone. We

proceeded to the top, and on our way fell in with a large flock or rather troop of Shetland ponies, chiefly females with their foals. On seeing strangers, both old and young galloped off with the fleetness of the wind. Several were of larger size than usual, and we think showed symptoms of the Scandinavian blood. As we skirted the verge of the perpendicular cliffs, we enjoyed some grand views downwards into the sea, and when we got to the pinnacle of the great eastern precipice, nothing could be more magnificent than the panoramic prospect which lay around us. The sun was low, the atmosphere perfectly clear, the sea calm, and the range of sight embraced the whole of the Shetland Islands, purple, green, or grey, according to their nature and position, and all encompassed by the glittering waters. When we gazed from us horizontally into the far distance, we had the subdued and mellow light of the golden sunset, and that general softening produced by the well known and beautiful influence of aërial prospective, but when we looked to one side downwards, the effect of *nearness* to the black and wave-worn precipice, and subdued though sullen sea, was startling, and almost fearful. The

island of Bressay lay as it were beneath our feet, from whence the eye passed over the mainland of Shetland, to the far western solitary Foula, or southwards to Sumburgh Head, while in a northerly direction in the dimmer distance lay the various isles of Fetlar, Yell, and Unst. The landward portion of all these points of view, especially that of the mainland, is intersected everywhere by narrow friths and bays, and the dark rocks and green pastures, and the barren mountain summits, are all, when seen from such commanding height, encompassed by and rendered almost resplendent by the calm lustre of surrounding waters. A wild sight also was it to cast the eye eastwards over the boundless ocean,—no land in view, nor any fixed enduring thing, perhaps a single speck-like sail upon the far horizon, the slowly heaving surface of the nearer sea seen slantingly from the sloping verge of the great o'erhanging precipice which screened its shoreward swell, known only by the long hoarse hollow voice reverberated from the unseen cliffs below.

After enjoying this panoramic view of sea and land, we descended from the greater height by the verge of some precipitous and overhanging cliffs,

(from which, lying flat upon the ground, we peered from time to time), till we came opposite to what is called the Holm of Noss,—holm seeming to signify a small dependent island, at only a short distance from another of larger size. And truly here Britannia needs no bulwark,—"Her Holm is on the deep," and a wild and weather-beaten Holm it is, consisting of a rocky mass of a couple of acres or thereby in extent, perfectly precipitous along its entire circumference, flat upon the surface, where it is covered by a coarse and heavy vegetation, and separated from the Noss itself by a tremendous ravine, down which you see and hear the surging of the ocean waters, which look as black as pitch from the dreadful shadowing of the high and dismal rocks by which they are on either side encompassed. This intermediate chasm may be about 200 feet in depth,—the space from cliff to cliff some fifty or sixty yards. We found a wooden post and a large stone near the edge of the precipice on the Noss side, on which we then were standing, and we could see a mass apparently of coarse vegetation, covering, it might be, a stone or two upon the corresponding verge of the opposing Holm.

Stretching between these points across the deep ravine, and over the darksome sea, were a couple of parallel lines of stout ropes, on which a kind of sparred box or cradle is suspended, running on sheaves or blocks. To the cradle itself is attached a long and slender rope. Now it is by means of this frail and rather frightful carriage that the country people cross over to the Holm in spring, to collect the eggs of sea-fowl,—its insular and naturally inaccessible character being a great inducement to these feathered creatures to settle on its grassy summit. The natives themselves are by no means fond of the venture, and do not put it in practice except when occasional circumstances may require it. However, we determined to try the experiment, having never before taken a flight of this kind,—so the cradle being pulled close to the edge of the yawning chasm, we stepped in, and settling down upon our *hunckers*, away we went birring across upon the ropes, our own weight carrying us almost all the way to the other side, except a few yards, which we required to work with our hands till the cradle came in contact with the face of the precipice, to the top of which we clambered out. We had been preceded, though

contrary to our own request, by the Rev. Mr. Hamilton of Bressay, who had kindly desired to make our assurance doubly sure, and give us a helping hand upon the Holm. None of the natives followed our example.

We then perambulated the top of the Holm, which is quite flat, with perfectly precipitous edges all around. The rank vegetation before alluded to is almost entirely composed of common chickweed (*Stellaria media*), which reaches in tangled masses to a person's knees, with intermediate tufts or knolls of green grass, distinguished by a foliage somewhat resembling that of sea-pink. The breeding season was over, and the sea-fowl were all upon the wing, filling the air with varied clanging cries. We skirted the different sides of the Holm, looking down its vast precipices upon the heaving waves below, and also enjoyed a striking view (lost to our friends upon the larger isle) of the Noss-Head, and its great perpendicular wall of nearly 600 feet. Just before leaving, we descried a pair of well fledged yet *wooly* scouries, or young gulls. They were so close to the edge of the precipice, that parts of the webs of their feet were actually hidden from view

as we approached them, in consequence of being bent down on the other side. The vast rocky wall was also at this place undermined, and projected over the rest of the precipice, and the abyss of waters. We were determined, however, to hold communication with the said maws, especially as Mr. Hamilton assured us they would not venture to fly for the first time from such a height. So when we came within a yard or two, we lay down upon our chest, and crawled like an insidious snake towards them. They seemed somewhat alarmed, huddled if possible still closer to the yawning edge, and our only doubt then was whether to try to wave them side-ways from the edge, so as to get them a little behind us, or make a *grab* at them at once, with the risk of throwing both them and ourselves into the sea. At this critical moment we were amused to find that our reverend friend had also laid himself flat upon the ground, and had firmly grasped our ankles with his hands. He then repeated—"Seize upon them, for they wont fly." Upon which we caught the nearer by the points of the wings, and threw it behind us. We were about to do the same to the other, when it anticipated the movement, and

threw itself over the precipice, and although it could not exactly fly, it had sense enough to expand its till then unused wings, and descended into the briny deep, falling with a heavy splash upon the surface. In the mean time, the minister of Bressay, instead of making a diversion in our favour by taking prisoner the gull which had already struck its colours, still kept grasping us with tenacious kindness by the heels. But as soon as we got one of our legs disentangled, we made a turn round towards the other gull, who had somewhat recovered his senses, and had again gained the edge of the precipice a few feet to one side; and no doubt observing that nothing dreadful had befallen his brother in consequence of his premature plunge into the deep, and being encouraged to a like magnanimous effort by the wild cries of his angry parents, who were flying over our heads, he too, when our hand came within an inch of his latter end, launched himself into the air, and a pound of feathers, as we remember being told by Mrs. Marcet, being as heavy as a pound of lead, was in a few moments floating for the first time upon the bosom of the sea.

Of course, we had still to return to the side of

the chasm, and while doing so we bethought ourselves that should any one by means of the smaller cord before mentioned have pulled the cradle back to the other side of the ravine, what would become of the two ornithologists, left alone upon their own resources to enact Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, upon a desolate island! However, no one had done this, nor was it likely they would, even if we had not had the protecting presence of our kind friend the Sheriff of the county, who with the rest of the party was waiting our return upon the firmer footing of the Noss itself. The backward journey is more difficult, though in no way more dangerous than the other, because the Noss side, from which we had formerly glided, is the higher of the two, and so in re-crossing rather more self-exertion is required, to work the cradle upwards and along. On the other hand, the aeronaut has the advantage of being partly towed by the small additional rope. We this time entered first, and as practice makes perfect, we no sooner were half-way across than we called to those who aided our own endeavours, to desist a few minutes, that we might look about us leisurely, and enjoy the downward view of the yawning gulf beneath, and the

lengthened deep ravine of rocky wall through which the great sea waters for ever heave their way. There we hung suspended over the wild

abyss, a small dark speck of human clay, with certainly no malignant thoughts in mind, though doubtless deemed by many a sharp-billed screaming neighbour both above and beneath us a vile unauthorised intruder into what Shakspeare calls "the canopy of the kites and crows." Having now no remnant of the somewhat nervous almost palpitating emotion with which we first set foot within the cradle, we stood upright, and holding

the lateral ropes firmly in either hand, we gazed beneath and around on the unexampled scene by which we were environed. It cannot, however, be described in words, because the pervading feeling and effect of the whole arise not so much from what one sees, as from the fact of his seeing it from the airy centre of a vast ravine, suspended mid-way between two black gigantic cliffs, in a small sparred box, 200 feet above the swelling sea. We felt as if we had been endowed with some newly acquired and supernatural power, which enabled us thus to float in air as freely and as fearlessly as a strong-winged bird of prey, and thus supposing ourself an eagle, we doubt not had we clutched a gull we should have eaten it upon the spot. Indeed our chief reason for not remaining longer so suspended, was a peculiar feathery feeling all over, with a strange sensation more especially about the nose and feet, as if the former was becoming hard, horny, *aquiline*, and the latter were quickly changing from toes to talons, to say nothing of an incipient prolongation of the heel into a hind-claw. All this might have been fancy, but we did not like it at the time, so we called out—" Pull away boys, pull," and

were glad to find ourselves once more on terra firma, after being hauled up again to the edge of the rock from which we had originally taken flight. A few yards inland we found the Minister of Lerwick, who is a bold seaman but a bad cragsman, holding up both his hands into the air,—the Sheriff shaking his head reprovingly,—and the Fishery Inspector of the eastern coast lying on the ground with his face covered, that he might not even witness "such foolish rashness, which was just a temptin' o' Providence."*

We then collected our scattered forces, and

* It is said to be above 200 years since a father and his son determined to establish a footing on this hitherto impregnable Holm of Noss. The bribe offered for the accomplishment of this venture was a cow. The son succeeded in effecting his object, though to look at the cliffs now, it seems to be quite inconceivable how he managed it, and still more to understand how he carried up with him a couple of stakes which he drove into the ground opposite the narrowest part of the chasm. Round these the double of a cord was passed, the end of which being thrown to the mainland by means of a stone tied to it, a thicker and a thicker rope was gradually carried across, till that of a proper strength was fairly established. The poor fellow, through whose daring efforts all this was effected, perished in attempting to descend again by the way he had climbed.—Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *MS. Journal*, p. 104.

descending to the quarter of the Noss shore on which we had left our boat, we stepped in, and re-embarked on board the Princess Royal. The evening was fine, and we passed it pleasantly. A large troop of bottle-nose whales were seen ploughing the deep. We were not without hopes that they might have run ashore, as they often do in shallow bays. But the waters near the lofty and precipitous cliffs of Noss-Head are of great depth, and we noticed that as soon as the leading whale came near the land, he wheeled about, and made again sea-wards, followed by all his huge companions. We continued our course northwards from Noss, coasting along the remaining portion of the eastern shores of Bressay, and then turning leftwards, we rounded the northern extremity of the latter, and entering the narrow sound which separates it from the Shetland main, we struck again to the south, and towards ten at night re-anchored in Lerwick Bay.

On the forenoon of the ensuing day, 25th August, we paid a farewell visit to the town of Lerwick, calling among other places at the Fort. This, till of late years, was held by a small garrison, and has still its battlements and embra-

sures, and the iron implements of "loud-throated war" protruding their threatening though long silent mouths. It is now used as a sheriff-court, a prison, and other public purposes. The prison rooms are warm and dry, pervaded by heated air, of course but sparingly furnished, and in spite of the improved system, exhibiting by no means an inviting character as places of abode. It has sometimes come into our mind for a moment as a curious subject of reflection, that while millions of our decent fellow-creatures out of doors are doomed to misery and want, and in spite of Dr. Alison's humanest efforts, are forgotten or neglected by those who might minister to their necessities, no sooner is a vagabond detected in a crime, for which he deserves and is awarded punishment, than a full flow of kindly feeling inundates his prison walls, and the compassionate sympathy both of societies and single women is enlisted in his favour, and spiritual and corporeal comforts are showered upon him. The very name of Mrs. Fry is so expressive of the glad and odorous simmering sound of a well kept kitchen, that we often envy those who either by fate or free-will are sufficiently undeserving to deserve her gracious

presence. Meanwhile, honest men and decent women are starving in many a murky unknown corner. I went into only two of these Shetland cells. In the first there was a lonely melancholy-looking man, and nothing with him but a bible and a camp-stool. He rose respectfully when we entered, and smoothed down the hair upon his forehead, which we presume corresponded to taking off his hat. He had been apprehended (but not yet tried, still less condemned and executed,) for stealing ling fish, a practice somewhat on the increase, and which ought to be rather checked than encouraged, because from the mode of drying fish which we formerly alluded to, and the necessity of exposure to sun and air for days and even weeks during the completion of the process, great temptation is afforded by this facility of theft. It is therefore necessary to expose the thieves as well as the fish. The other prisoner whom we visited was a female. She was imprisoned for stealing clothes, and the term of her captivity was nearly run. She was spinning busily, and although she tried to look shy and ashamed when she saw a stranger, we think on the whole she was tolerably canty, poor injured dear. We might have been sorrier for her if she had not been so ugly.

CHAPTER VII.

SHETLAND AND ORKNEY—CONTINUED.

After bidding a friendly farewell to our Lerwick acquaintances, most of whom assembled on one of the small piers to see us off, we set sail in the afternoon of the 25th, our evening destination being Balta Sound, in the Island of Unst, the most northern of the Shetland group. We made a pleasant and rather rapid run, passing in the first place again between Bressay and the main-island, and continuing northwards, enjoyed the view of numerous bays and headlands on our left. To the right was many a dark rock just raising its horrid front above the waves, but the water was deep, and we glided unconcernedly along, notwithstanding the ominous name of Grief Skerry, and other craggy isles by which we were encompassed. While passing out from Bressay Sound, the position of a sunken rock called the Unicorn was pointed out to us.* The following historical

* Just beyond the opening of the Sound a green conical hill arises called Luggie's Knowe, from a celebrated character who is

tradition, not recorded in our Lowland history, seems peculiar to Shetland. It relates to a passage in the infamous life of the Earl of Bothwell, on his expulsion from Scotland. "After the dispersion," says Mr. Edmonstone, "of his small squadron by Kirkcaldy of Grange and Murray of Tulliebardine, the former in a ship called the Unicorn, pursued him so closely that when the vessel that carried Bothwell escaped by the north passage of Bressa Sound, Kirkcaldy came in by the south, and continued to chase to the northward. When his enemies were gaining fast upon him, and his capture appeared inevitable, Bothwell's pilot, who was well acquainted with the course, contrived to sail close by a sunken rock, which he passed in safety; while Kirkcaldy, sailing nearly in the same direction, but unconscious of hidden danger, struck upon it, and was wrecked. The rock, which can be seen at low water, is called the Unicorn to this day."*

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said by his compact with the Evil One to have been enabled, out of a hole in the hill, to draw up with a hook all manner of sea-fish ready dressed.—Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *MS. Journal*, p. 106.

* *View of Zetland*, vol. i., p. 89.

Ere long we passed on our right the Island of Whalsey, on which Mr. Bruce of Symbister has built a very handsome house and offices, said to have cost, with their various outworks, about £20,000. We had no opportunity of seeing its interior, but its external aspect is imposing. It is built of granite, the stones having been carried across the sound. An improved system of farming has we believe been carried on for a considerable time in this island. Further onwards in the eastern distance we could perceive the small rocky islands called the Out Skerries, where the deep sea fishing for ling is practised to a great extent with all the bustle and activity of those "who are obliged to catch the few calm days of summer in seeking their bread upon the waters."

Leaving to the leftward Luna Noss and Holm, we could perceive the opening into Yell Sound, a strait which divides the island of Yell from the mainland of Shetland, and is itself thickly covered by an archipelago of smaller islands. Yell is about fifteen miles in length, and is nearly cut in two by a couple of narrow inlets of the sea, called Whalefirth and Mid Yell Voes. "As the intervening space," says the Rev. James Robertson,

" consists entirely of peat-moss resting on a substratum of blue clay, a canal might be cut at a very trifling expense, which the influx and reflux of the sea would in a short time convert into a channel, through which boats could pass at any time of tide. Were a communication between the seas on the east and west side of Yell thus opened up, there can be little doubt that the value of a locality in the vicinity of either of the voes just mentioned, would be considerably increased from the additional quantity and variety of fish that would be thereby introduced into them, and the facility afforded to all the inhabitants of that district of prosecuting the various kinds of fishing, on whatever side of the island their endeavours were likely to be attended with the greatest success."* The land is comparatively low along the eastern side, in many places sandy, and with frequent landing stations, but on the western side, especially after advancing some miles northward, the shore is so bold and precipitous that from Westsandwick to the northern point of Gloup,

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 83.

there are only two places for a stretch of eleven miles where a landing can be effected,—Whalefirth Voe and the Dale of Symbister. Considerable increase of cultivation has taken place in Yell within the memory of the present generation, but the small tenants still entertain a strong and most mistaken aversion to leases, from a belief that it is solely the landlord (and not themselves) who is to be benefited by such a covenant. Another drawback on improvement arises from the smallness of the portions into which the land is let off for the accommodation of the fishing population, each family among whom must have a house to live in. These are built by the proprietor at an original cost of perhaps not more than £15, but as they do not last above twenty-five years, and an heritor of £400 per annum may have 100 of such houses on his land, he requires besides the ordinary expenses of repairs to build about four new houses every year at the price of £60. "That 33,000 acres of pasture, 1500 of arable, and 2500 of inclosed grass land, should only produce an average rent of scarcely 8d. per acre, can only be attributed to the distance at which they are situated from

a market for their produce."* We doubt not that steam communication, which has recently been established with Shetland, will raise the price of that produce, and increase the value of the islands.

Proceeding northwards we passed through Colgrave Sound, having the Island of Fetlar close upon our right. On this island we perceived the handsome villa-looking dwelling of Sir Arthur Nicolson, named Burgh Lodge, probably in consequence of its standing close upon the position of one of those ancient Scandinavian buildings which we have already endeavoured to describe, and on the site of which the proprietor has erected an observatory. Close upon shore we could distinguish the remains of some antique dun, with a double ditch of fortification around it, partly swallowed by the insatiate waves. On clearing the Sound we were struck by the bold character of the north of Fetlar, especially of two fine headlands each with its terminal though detached rock or holm. This island is about seven miles in extent, with a breadth of four. Its fisheries are productive though prosecuted with less activity and zeal than might be.

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 92.

The boats are too small for so wild a country, surrounded by such a wilderness of waves. We believe also that the sad catastrophe of 1832 continued for long to deaden the energies of these poor people.*

There are various curing stations both in Fetlar and Yell. The ling fishery is carried on chiefly from Funzie on the east side of the former, and from Gloup on the north side of the latter. This fishery has been long practised advantageously, but that of herrings is comparatively of recent introduction throughout the Shetland islands. According to the minister there is not a more commodious station in the whole group than that of Fetlar. From the beginning of July till the middle of October, these last named fish surround the island, so that from whatever quarter the wind may blow, the boats have shelter somewhere. Cockles abound in Yell.†

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* Seventeen Shetland boats perished that season in a storm. About £3000 were raised in Shetland and London for relief of bereaved widows and children, and small annual grants of money from that fund have been allowed since the year in question, and will be so till 1843.

† We have elsewhere expressed a doubt as to the occurrence

Working our devious and now dusky way among sundry rocky islands, we passed the eastern opening into Uyea and Blumel Sounds, and

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of true salmon in Shetland. "This doubt," says the minister of Mid and South Yell, "admits of an easy solution, as no fewer than twenty-one were caught, at one drag of a net, on the sands of Vatsetter in this parish in 1831. All that have been caught here are of a small size, none having been seen exceeding nine and a half pounds. This, however, is not to be wondered at, when the destructive habits of the seal, in reference to this fish, are taken into account,—half a score of which have been seen guarding the creek through which the fish had to pass before getting into fresh-water, which they generally attempt from 20th July to the middle of August. The sea-trout which are most abundant here, are somewhat later in their habits, and never seek to get into fresh-water before the middle of August or beginning of September."—*New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 86. We think that Mr. Shaw's experiment might be advantageously put in practice here, and in similar situations. We believe that in certain seasons the great salmon rivers throw off swarms, and that both grilse and salmon, though habitually attached to their native waters, are at times induced to wander away in search of others. Now where fish are scarce or almost unknown, a few advanced individuals of both sexes should be conveyed from the nearest locality, and either themselves placed in the higher waters of streams or upland lochs, or the mingled spawn deposited beneath the protecting gravel of shallow fords, or even in wicker baskets containing light gravel, and sunk be-

then getting into more open water, and skirting a portion of the eastern coast of Unst, we ran into Balta Sound, in the sheltered centre of the last named island, and there we cast our anchor for the night.

The morning of the 26th of August was dark and stormy, according but too well with our notions of the most northern island of the British dominions. Mr. Ingram, the clergyman of Unst, to whom we had given a passage the preceding day from Lerwick, kindly came on board to breakfast, and at an early hour we also received an obliging note from Mr. Edmonstone of Buness, offering the hospitalities of his neighbouring residence at the head of Balta Sound.

The island of Unst extends from north to south about twelve miles, with a mean breadth of three. It contains upwards of thirty-six square miles, or 24,000 acres. Its highest hill is Saxa Vord, which rises abruptly from the sea to the height of 938 feet on the eastern side of the bay of Burra-

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neath the surface in protected places. The probability is, that the parr of the ensuing season, after the expiry of a prolonged residence in the fresh-water, will seek the sea as smolts, and return inland sooner or later in the productive form of grilse.

firth, at the northern end of the island. From the head of that firth an extended valley runs southwards to the other extremity of the island, containing a chain of lochs some of which empty their waters into Uyea Sound, while others debouche into the northern bay.

Balta Sound affords a secure and land-locked anchorage. Mr. Edmonstone's house stands towards its head upon the northern shore. There dwelt for several months M. Biot, the great French *physicien*, when occupied in measuring the time of the seconds pendulum. One advantage presented by this far distant island over the Orkney group, for the scene of such operations, consisted in its affording the means not only of extending the British line two degrees northwards, but also of carrying it eastwards almost upon the meridian of Formentera, M. Biot's last southern station in the Mediterranean. By this the Shetland operation became in fact the prolongation of the French one,—the two together forming an arc almost equal to the fourth part of the distance from the pole to the equator. But setting aside the scientific importance of the subject, what a change from the calm clear shores of the south of

Europe, to the dark and desolate voes of Unst. "It was no longer," says the philosopher, "those fortunate isles of Spain, those smiling countries, Valentia, that garden where the orange and lemon trees in flower, shed their perfumes around the tomb of Scipio, or over the majestic ruins of the ancient Saguntum. Here on landing upon rocks mutilated by the waves, the eye sees nothing but a soil wet, desert, and covered with stones and moss, and craggy mountains scarred by the inclemency of the heavens; not a tree, not a bush, to soften the savage scene; here and there some scattered huts, whose roofs covered with grass, allowed the thick smoke with which they are filled to escape into the fog." How natural are the sensations of a wise and not vain-glorious Frenchman, of one whose country alike distracted and distracting, had so often been both the source and scene of tyrannous bloodshed, while reflecting on the profound and unalterable peace so long enjoyed by the natives of these misty isles. "During twenty-five years in which Europe was devouring herself, the sound of a drum had not been heard in Unst, scarcely in Lerwick; during twenty-five years the door of the house I inhabited had re-

mained open day and night. In all this interval of time, neither conscription nor press-gang had troubled or afflicted the poor but tranquil inhabitants of this little isle. The numerous reefs which surround it, and which render it accessible only at favourable seasons, serve them for defence against privateers in time of war;—and what is it that privateers would come to seek for? If there were only trees and sun, no residence could be more pleasant: but if there were trees and sun, every body would wish to go thither, and peace would exist no longer."

But we fear that we ourselves shall never reach home, unless rounding the Scaw of Unst, we at last steer our way southwards. Yet there is something so remarkable in a Parisian philosopher residing for two months in the most northern of the Shetland islands, that we could not avoid transferring to these pages the preceding extracts from our Note-book, inscribed just twenty-five years ago. We at last put on our pea-jackets and landed in this "kingdom of the rain, of the wind, and of the tempest, whose atmosphere, constantly impregnated with chill moisture, only softens to a certain degree the roughness of the

winter, under the sad condition of giving no summer." What an unhappy medium!—its expression, however, being somewhat overcharged by the philosopher.

There are no roads in Unst, but plenty of open unenclosed country, and no lack of ponies. So the Secretary and the fishery inspector of the eastern coast, mounted and made their way on business to Uyea Sound, while we took our way across the country, rod in hand, towards the Loch of Cliff. It had been reported to us as a first-rate sea-trout station at the proper season, but we presume we were a week or two before their time, for we saw not a single fish of that kind, and killed only about a dozen and a half of common trout. These, however, were in good condition, and afforded us an excellent repast. We observed in their interior several small shells, and have seldom failed to find trouts in good condition when feeding on testacea.

Meanwhile, as the Secretary was riding diagonally up the sloping side of an open valley, he started one of the great Icelandic owls (*Strix Nyctea*), the most beautiful and magnificent of the European nocturnal birds of prey, and known to haunt the moorish wilds and craggy cliffs of Unst alone

of all the British islands. We thought of it while angling along the lone shores of the afore-named loch, and every little lichen-covered knoll, or tuft of grizzly grass we came to, brought up its vision to our mind; and the Secretary's seeing it thus without our being present, was the only unkind and thoughtless thing he did throughout the voyage,—perhaps the only one throughout his course of life. It seemed to him as large as a goose, yet with a soft and buoyant flight, and as it was manifestly out for prey, its diurnal habits (as inferred by some observers from its hawk-like form of head) may be regarded as confirmed.

The Secretary described his general way as lying entirely over grassy or short heath pasture, some of it extremely bare, and portions so covered with stones as to have been impracticable for any other beast of burden than an unshod yet sure-footed Shetland pony. Immense flocks of golden plovers were seen upon the hills. In a hollow among these hills he came to a small loch, the name of which was not remembered, but which is worthy of record. It may contain about eight or ten acres of surface, and has a small green island

in it, but that which renders it remarkable is, that it discharges a strong stream from its eastern side towards the eastern sea, and a still stronger one from its north-western angle, which runs into a valley connected with other waters flowing into the Loch of Cliff, and so by Burra Fiord into the northern ocean. Crossing from this loch over the top of Vord-hill he descended the southern side of the latter, well covered by cultivation, and the scattered dwellings of a large township. These, as is the custom here, were surrounded by one great dyke of enclosure, containing smaller subdivisions. This brought him to the Bay of Sandwick, well named from its white and brilliant sand, of which the sea has at one time thrown up a natural rampart, confining a little lake of fresh water, which the same sea seems now capriciously bent on eating into. In the south-western angle of the bay there is a fishing station, and the curing of herrings was going on. The people were found very intelligent, and one very fine-looking old man of tall stature was observed. Here, as elsewhere in Shetland, the gait of the women is disfigured by their ungraceful (and we presume

unnecessary) mode of turning in their toes.* "Much has been said," observes the minister of Unst, "and much has been written, by men very superficially acquainted with the state of the country, about the wretchedness, the enslaved, and oppressed state of the peasantry. They have had all their information from hearsay, and have not given themselves the trouble to enquire after the truth, when they might have had it impartially stated to them; and the consequence has been, that they have been greatly imposed upon, and they in their turn have imposed upon others. They who have lived long amongst the people, and are intimately acquainted with their ways and means, and have seen the comforts they enjoy, can bear the most ample testimony to the fact, that there are but few of her Majesty's subjects of the same class, who are treated in a more kindly and indulgent manner by their superiors, who enjoy so much liberty, who pass through life with so little labour or care, or who have more reason to be contented with the situation and circumstances a kind Providence has assigned them.

* Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *MS. Journal*, p. 108.

They do not live in affluence; but they seldom want the necessaries, and they have many of the luxuries of life, with one-half of the toil that people of their class are doomed to undergo in more genial climes." This we fear too flattering picture, scarcely accords with the existing state of things. A general failure of the crop for several successive years, has now produced a great amount of poverty and destitution.

Crossing the high ground of the south-eastern end of Unst, the Secretary then came down upon the ruined Castle of Muness (the property of Mr. Mouat of Garth), which stands among a cluster of cottages about a mile or so from the sea. It consists of an oblong building, with a round tower at

the north-western angle, and another at the south-eastern, while at the other two angles are hanging turrets, with beautiful machicoles delicately wrought in an extremely hard free-stone. Several of the shooting-holes are ingeniously contrived with a deep cut or groove from right to left, and also up and down (giving a star-like sculpture to the stone) so as to allow an increase of range to the archer or musketeer. Over the door is the date of erection, 1598, and a tablet inscribed with ancient Gothic letters, beautifully raised:—

> "List ze to knaw this building quha began?
> Laurance the Bruce, he was that worthy man,
> Quha earnestlie his airis and affspring prayis,
> To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis."

This self-praising Laurence was a Perthshire gentleman, who (like Moses of old) had fled from his native country in consequence of having slain a neighbour in some affray. He was son of Euphemia (daughter of Lord Elphinstone) who having borne as a natural child to James V. him who was afterwards Robert Stewart, Abbot of Holyrood and Earl of Orkney, married Bruce of Cultsmalindie.*. This castle might even yet be repaired so as to make an excellent habitation,

although the Secretary observed with regret many of the finely carved stones built into and forming a portion of the dry masonry of the dykes and cottages adjoining. The "worthy man" above mentioned is said to have perished in a boat with all his people during a sudden squall. We believe that the Bruces of Symbister and of Sumburgh are his descendants.

As the Secretary made his way over the hill towards Uyea he passed a nice school-house and teacher's dwelling, maintained by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. All the children can read, and most of them can write. As he descended upon the township of Uyea he observed a rude stone pillar on the high ground, supposed to mark the site of some ancient battle, or the grave of a mighty hero. There are here two fresh-water lakes close upon the beach, one of them rendered brackish by spring-tides. The curing both of cod and herring was being carried on. The boys were busy catching sillocks or cuddies, called podlies in the south. Among the houses was one with a flat paper roof belonging to the doctor. There is a good pier with a hammer-head, and the road-stead is rendered quite

secure by the island of Uyea which land-locks it. The Secretary then proceeded up the valley which leads over to Balta, and passing some lakes he came to the Yellabrun (*Hiel-a-brun*, or burn of health) a very powerful spring, which is supposed to possess sanative virtues, provided the person who drinks from it casts three stones into the heap that covers its head, keeps silence till he reaches his own home, and is crossed in his path by no one on his way. The ruins of long extended dykes were noticed, the origin of which it is not easy to explain. A fine view of Balta Sound and the Loch of Cliff, &c. was afforded from these uplands; and here, as elsewhere in Shetland, were noticed small stone enclosures of a few yards square, for rearing cabbage plants. We were struck with the peculiar appearance of the native sheep,—small, active creatures, with deer-like necks and heads, many of them black or brown, and some of them mottled. One had a brown body and white head, with a ring of black around each eye. Ponies were numerous. The hill pastures outside the large enclosures of the township are all in common. There are no less than

300 different marks put upon the ears of the sheep, cattle, and horses, to distinguish individual property, and these marks are all registered, so that there can be no mistake.*

We had this day an opportunity of inspecting one of the primitive mills of Shetland. The grinding stones, usually formed of micaceous schist, are placed upon a frame-work, and beneath a roof. A strong iron spindle is wedged into the upper stone, and passing through a hole in the centre of the lower one, is firmly fixed into the

* Sir T. D. L.'s *MS. Journal*, p. 109.

upper end of a strong wooden post, at the base of which are mortised, in a slanting direction, a number of flat boards, forming the coggs of a kind of horizontal wheel. A trough from a natural rill of water is made to convey the moving power upon the wheel, which turns the upper mill-stone slowly round, and so grinds the grain, supplied either by an old straw basket or other rustic hopper, or more patiently by human hands.

It was in the neighbourhood of Balta Sound that Dr. Hibbert discovered chromate of iron, as an abundant ingredient in the Serpentine of Unst. This ore is an object of some commercial importance, as affording a yellow pigment useful in the arts. It occurs in several continental countries of Europe, but had been previously imported into Britain chiefly from America, the expense of transport being of course considerable.

The wind being fair for our passage out of Balta Sound, we weighed anchor at an early hour in the morning of the 27th of August. Making our exit through the same southern passage by which we had entered, we then turned northwards by the outside of Balta Island, which

showed a comparatively low and rocky coast towards the open sea. Beyond it, the Bay of Haroldswick opened to our view, after which the bold shore presented many fine precipitous cliffs,

> "Spurning the waves that in rebellious bands
> Assault their empire, and against them rise."

On crossing the mouth of Norwick Bay, the scenery increased in grandeur and variety.* Indeed nothing could well surpass the wild pictures which seemed rapidly to glide past us, as the vessel cut her way through water of most immaculate clearness.

We soon passed the Scaw Head and Holm, long regarded as the most northern points of the

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* Wick is a Norse term, of frequent application in the north of Scotland, and the remoter isles. It signifies an open bay. The name of Haroldswick is supposed to indicate the landing-place of Harold Harfäger, King of Norway, who visited Shetland towards the termination of the ninth century, chiefly with a view to coerce certain rebellious subjects of his own, who had sought refuge in those islands. However, as his hand was in at any rate, he took the opportunity of subduing Orkney, the Hebrides, and a large portion of the north of Scotland. Hence the prevalence of Scandinavian names of places over all these districts.

British dominions; but it appears that Captain Thomas has now determined that

the more western Holms of Burra Fiord (here represented) are entitled to that distinction. This Burra Fiord is itself a deep and lengthened indentation, running southwards into the land between high bold-sided hills. Hermaness Head is also very fine. Crossing the mouth of Blumel Sound, which divides Unst from Yell, we found the same grand and varied scenery on the northern coast of the latter island,—the Holm of Gloup off its north-western angle, presenting perhaps the most interesting point of all. It is indeed the very *embarras de roches* which renders it impossible to do justice to this magnificent day's run. Passing the wider mouth of Yell Sound, we came to the Ramna Stacks, off Fiedeland Point, the most

northern portion of the mainland of Shetland.* All these desolate shores presented to our mind a singular combination of sternness and serenity; —above was many a radiant crown of grassy turf as green as emerald,—then an intermediate range of towering lurid rocks,—below a foaming ocean white as snow. The coast is everywhere pierced by yawning chasms, while lofty and precipitous stacks advance, like giant sentinels, into the sea. Though Fiedeland Point itself is comparatively low, it seems backed as we approach it by Roeness Hill, the loftiest elevation in Shetland.†

* "On the north of the parish of North-Mavine," Dr. Hibbert observes, "the low hilly ridges formed by the sea into deep fissures or caverns, terminate in a line of ragged coast, agreeably diversified by a long narrow peninsula of green land jutting out far into the northern ocean, which is named Fiedeland; an appelation of true Scandinavian origin, that is explained by Debes in his Description of Feroe. He observes that where grass is found so abundant and juicy, that oxen feed thereon both winter and summer, such places are named *Fiedelands;* and it is very remarkable, he adds, that where there are any Fiedelands, they invariably turn to the north-east and north."—*Shetland Islands*, p. 507.

† Actual height not greater than 1447 feet, though most erroneously stated in certain books and maps as 3944 !

The island of Little Uyea and its neighbourhood present some fine features, and the inward curving coast of the Shetland Main, which trends to the southwards, exhibits one of the most wonderful, we may say magical, scenes which we have ever witnessed. The cliffs are mostly of the brightest blood-red granite, or porphyry, of a red much more intense than any we have elsewhere seen in rocks, and contrasting strangely with the brilliant greens and yellows of the natural vegetation, while two waterfalls, one of them divided into several radiant streaks, pour themselves over a lofty precipice. Behind rose Roeness Hill, now capped by a murky veil of ominous clouds, which ere long, thickening in their descent, and spreading above and around us, discharged their heavy rain, and so darkened both sea and sky as to conceal all things from view but a few black rocks encompassed by roaring breakers. However, as we had now a head wind, we required to beat against it, tacking off and on the land, and notwithstanding heavy spiteful showers of pelting rain, ever and anon there were partial clearings of the kindly sky, and when we neared the coast from time to time, its great rocks were seen pro-

truding from their misty shroud, magnified by those looming vapours, and producing sensations in the mind of an almost unearthly nature, from their wild sublimity.

Crossing the mouth of Roeness Voe, we tacked outwards by the Ossa Skerries, one of which exhibits a fine Alpine outline. Oskren Head is also characterised by a finely shivered dislocated front. The point of the Burr to the southward of Hamna Voe, though rocky, is comparatively low, but off it rises a group of rocks so exactly resembling the towers and fortifications of an immense castle, that had we not known previously that no such work of human hands existed there, we would have deemed it some great fabric of masonic art. Still more is this deceptive aspect strengthened by an upright rock, the counterpart of a martello tower, occupying the very place where such a work should be. But now the black-streaked rain descended from a gloomy curtain of thick darkness, pouring and pelting on us, and the atmosphere became so overcharged, that it was only by snatches we could see the shore, and even the wave-cleaving Cutter seemed oppressed, almost impeded, by such a weight of murky vapours. However, we ere

long weathered the point of Esha Ness, and entered the northern portion of the great St. Magnus Bay. Off Tanwick appeared the huge insular rock called Dorholm, perforated by a magnificent archway, through which the waters flow, and beneath which it is said a vessel might pass with all her sails. We presume none has ever tried the passage, and there is plenty of sea-room outside. Many of the rocks along the shores of Sandwick Bay, and round by Hillswick Ness, are red in colour, extremely lofty, of varied shapes, and intermingled in their outlines with numerous stacks of wild fantastic forms. Of these last, the *Drongs* are the most noted and remarkable, appearing sometimes like a single rock, at others separating into dark detachments, as the vessel moves onwards. "This immense rock," says the minister, "rises almost quite perpendicular, to the height of an hundred feet from the water, and at a distance has the appearance of a vessel under sail. Near to this are two very high pillars, of the same kind of rock with the Drongs, and with the stupendous crags upon the shore. And it is not improbable that these have all been at one time united together, but

have separated, not by volcanic eruptions, but by the billows of the ocean, which nothing almost can resist, during the winter storms." Having achieved a good day's work, we now ran into Hillswick or Urie Firth, as the shades of night began to deepen the surrounding gloom.

On the 28th of August it blew a gale of wind, and we could not stir from our anchorage ground. However the time passed pleasantly in the cabin, writing our dispatches, and the fishery officer joined us from Grobsness in the course of the day. We afterwards landed at Saint Magnus' Kirk, where there is an old propped-up church, a seemingly comfortable manse, and a substantial dwelling-house, and piece of garden-ground occupied by Mr. Leisk, factor in these parts for Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie. Hillswick is a fishing and curing station of great importance. Neither cod nor herring are abundant,—the chief species being ling, of which we found about £450 worth in stacks upon the shore, in an admirable state of preservation, though with but a poor chance of being thoroughly dried during so moist a season. In former times these fish were found much nearer shore along the coasts of this parish (North-

Mavine), but now the boats must often sail or pull to sea some forty or fifty miles before they reach the fishing ground.*

The neck of the intervening ness or promontory

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* The following is the usual mode of cure. The fish are generally gutted before they are brought ashore. As soon as they are landed the *splitter* with a large knife cuts them open from head to tail, and extracts the upper half of the back-bone. He then hands them over to the washer, who with a brush and sea-water cleanses them of every particle of blood. When all the fish have been in this way split and washed, they are allowed to drain, and then come into the hands of the salter, who places a stratum of salt at the bottom of a large wooden vat, and over it a stratum of fish, and so alternately till the vat is filled. Above all are laid heavy stones, to keep the fish beneath the pickle. After the lapse of some days they are taken out, well washed and brushed from shoulder to tail, and put up in small heaps called *clamps*, to drain. They are then spread upon the shingly beach back downwards, exposed to the action of the sun, and after being alternately clamped and exposed singly, they are built into larger stacks, called steeples, which for the sake of equal pressure are themselves taken down and rebuilt, by which means the fish that were uppermost at one time are undermost at another. As soon as this drying or *pining* as it is technically called, is completed (as indicated by a white efflorescence appearing on the surface named the *bloom*), the fish are transported to a dry cellar lined with wood, and piled up closely, if not speedily shipped off to market.—See HIBBERT'S *Shetland Islands*, p. 519.

which divides Hillswick from Sandwick Bay, is probably not more than 300 yards across, and so low, that during north-east gales and spring-tides the sea sometimes breaches right over from one firth into the other. Fresh tusk and Norway haddocks have even been found lying in the church-yard. The Secretary having been ashore on business, climbed the rising ground which forms the summit of Hillswick Ness, and from the precipice beyond he looked directly down upon the Drongs, and although the view was not such as to show their number and peculiar forms, it was yet highly picturesque, particularly as the sea was strongly agitated by the gale, and the white columnar spray was darting up against their blackened sides. The wind indeed was so violent that he could hardly stand, and the fishery officer's hat and wig were twice blown away, occasioning each time a lengthened race. From another point of view Roeness, and its neighbouring stacks and cliffs of red-coloured rock, formed a grand subject for the pencil.*

Mr. Leisk confirmed what we had been else-

* Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *MS. Journal*, p. 111.

where told that both the ling and herring fisheries were injured by the boatmen attempting both, instead of adhering to one or other.* We have already remarked that the herring fishery of Shetland, as practised by natives, is in a great measure a modern branch of industry.† In an-

* The Secretary has observed as a reason for the frequent inferiority of the Shetland herrings, that the people instead of catching them in the earlier part of the season when the fish are really good, do not begin to fish for them in any quantity until after the cod, ling, and tusk fishery is over, towards the beginning of September, by which time many of the shoals have spawned. Advantage would probably arise from the fish-curers dividing boat's crews into herring fishers and fishers of cod, ling, and tusk, so as partly to prosecute both kinds of occupation at the same and best season, and if this could be accomplished without loss in the quantity of hard fish cured, the improvement in the quality of Shetland herrings would undoubtedly be great. —Sir T. D. L.'s *Report to the Commissioners*, for 1841.

† That our herring fishery, however unsuccessfully pursued, was not altogether neglected in the early periods of our own history, may be inferred from the Scottish Parliament (in the reign of James III., 1471,) having enacted, "That certain lords, spiritual and temporal, and burgesses, cause great ships, busses, pink-boats, *with nets*, and all other necessaries for fishing." James V. interfered to prevent the oppression of our people by the Dutch fishers, and James VI. established certain royal burghs with a view to encourage the trade in question.

cient times, however, it was carried on by foreign nations, especially the Dutch, as an object of the highest importance. The commercial intercourse which this induced was of itself of great advantage to the Shetlanders, who manufactured large supplies of gloves, stockings, rugs, and night-caps, in anticipation of the great fair held annually during the fishing season. Quantities of fresh meat were also required by the foreign crews, the native yawls were much employed attending the larger vessels, and even the little shelties were in frequent requisition by ponderous Dutchmen, who fondly deemed equestrian exercise advantageous to their health, after the confinement of the sea. In the beginning of the seventeenth century 1500 Dutch herring busses, each of 80 tons, were employed along the Shetland coasts, with an additional fleet of 400 dogger-boats, of 60 tons, convoyed by 20 armed ships each carrying 20 guns. The last named vessels were partly fitted up as hospitals for the sick, and likewise contained supernumerary hands, carpenters, &c. as well as fishing materials of all kinds, with a view to aid whatever busses might meet with accidental loss. At an after period the number of these Dutch

busses amounted to 2200, although owing to wars and other causes a great diminution took place towards the close of the seventeenth century. In the year 1702 the French, after an action with the Dutch ships of war, burned 150 of these vessels in Bressay Sound. In the year 1774 the Dutch busses did not exceed 200, while about an equal number belonged to Danes, Prussians, French, and Flemings. At this period the English had *two* vessels, the Scotch *one*. The Dutch Shetland fishery has ever since continued to decrease, has been frequently interrupted, and now scarcely exists.*

These busses were in use to sail from Holland about the 10th or 15th of June, and generally rendezvoused for a few days in Bressay Sound. The doggers or yaggers were swift sailing vessels which ran home with the earliest caught herrings, for which an enormous price was sure to be obtained. They set off the first night of the fishery if they could procure even ten barrels,—the value being often £50 per barrel, as these first fruits of the fishery were regarded as highly medici-

* HIBBERT'S *Shetland Islands*, p. 499; and EDMONSTONE'S *View of Zetland*, vol. i., p. 262.

nal and advantageous. Although the British Government directed its attention to the subject nearly a hundred years ago, it is only since the commencement of the present century that the native population have devoted themselves to this important occupation.

The herrings on the west coast of Shetland in the early part of the season are almost equal to those of Loch Fyne, but few are taken at that time owing to the engrossment of the people by the cod, tusk, and ling fishery, which prevails from the end of May till the beginning of August. When the actual herring fishery commences, that otherwise invaluable species has not only become heavy with spawn, but millions of them are speedily found in an exhausted and deteriorated condition from the performance of the spawning process.

The fishery officer informed us that he pays £5 a year for a small farm, on the common pasture of which he may keep as many sheep as he pleases. The marks are as numerous here as in Unst. When any new person desires to have a mark, he has one assigned and appropriated to himself, which must be publicly advertised or made known,

to ensure that no one else has already selected the same. He then pays half-a-crown for registration, —the sum going to the maintenance of the poor. But if he requires to take even a lamb from the hill side for family use, he must warn his neighbours of his intention, that they if they please may go with him to see that he helps himself to nothing but his own. We believe that crimes are rare in Shetland, with the exception of some petty thefts, and even these are by no means common. Strolling beggars are hardly known. The poor are supported by the contributions at the church doors, and by a kind of authorised begging from the people of the particular division of the parish in which they have lived, and out of which they dare not carry their requisition. Our informant stated that there were only two old women saddled in this manner on his portion of the community.

The gale was still blowing fiercely on the morning of Sunday the 29th. Before going ashore to church we read in the usual course of the English prayers and service, St. Paul's voyage from Cesarea, and were more than usually impressed by the vivid language of the great apostle. On the conclusion of the ordinary service on shore, instead of

returning to the Cutter by the nearest path, we rode up the steep hill at the back of Mr. Leisk's house, and over its fine green sward, and down a steep descent into a glen, adorned by a fresh-water lake, which discharges itself by a short river-course into the sea. We then ascended a still steeper hill, the ponies never stopping to breathe, wound up the edge of a ravine, where there was a Shetland mill, passed by a boggy lake, and through one of the most difficult specimens of moor travelling (seeing we were not moss-troopers) we had for some time encountered, and ere long getting upon turf again crossed Roeness-Head. As we ascended the latter the aspect of the cliffs along shore was quite stupendous, and nothing could be finer than the view of the wild sea-pictures which we obtained from various points, with the huge stacks in the foreground, and Hillswick Ness and the Drongs beyond. Cantering over some beautiful turf, and taking our sure-footed shelties sometimes to the very edge of the precipices, we came to Braewick, where there is a great natural mound or barrier of rolled stones, supporting a fresh-water lake, and dividing it from the briny sea. This peculiar physical feature seems to be rather

common in Shetland. Here too the scene was extremely fine, the cliffs of Braewick being so picturesquely grand, their stacks so numerous, and of such varied forms, while the distant Hillswick Ness became more expanded, and the magical Drongs had as it were unfolded their "powers of darkness," and stood apart from each other in frowning majesty, though ever and anon concealed by racking mists. From time to time, as if answering some heavy pulse of the great ocean, a vast white surging wave would dart upwards from the rocks into the air, presenting for a moment a strange contrast between its snowy dancing spire and the intense and steadfast blackness of the Drongs.

Off we set again at a hand-canter. Nothing can surpass the willing alertness and sagacity of the Shetland ponies, especially when left to their own resources. If they stick in the bog at all, it is generally in consequence of the ignorance and misdirection of an unaccustomed rider, so the best plan is merely to give them a general notion of the route you wish to follow, and leave the details to their own experience. They don't like to be held much by the head, even when taking their

little springs from the top of peaty promontories "quench'd in a boggy Syrtis," and often refuse to go in the direction they are urged, taking a way of their own, which is invariably the right one. For this, and other reasons, it would probably be a hazardous experiment to attempt to improve the breed of these shelties by any increase of size or strength from foreign crosses, because the fine instinctive perceptions which so well adapt them to their present calling might be thereby altered and impaired. No breed can be more admirably conformed to the requisite mode of life and manners which prevails throughout the country, and they are so hardy as really not to know what stabling means. They are always to be met with on the mountain pastures, and if a man can only produce a saddle he may ride from Dan to Bersheba, that is to say, from Sumburgh Head to Fiedeland Point, at his own convenience. We were accompanied during our ride by a sort of running footman, a very active lad, who, partly by the untiring rapidity of his own movements, partly by his local knowledge of near cuts over bogs and down the steep descents, was almost always in advance, and ready to open the wicket-

gates of the walls which sweep so widely round the various townships. The same remark we have made regarding the native horses is also applicable to the cattle, which being by far the best adapted to the nature of the country they inhabit, ought not to be altered or at least enlarged. The most important matter to attend to in respect to both species is the judicious selection of the breeding stock,—a point, we believe, rather disregarded in these northern isles.

Passing by a good deal of cultivation, and by a school-house of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge,—a society which so greatly deserves the gratitude of Scotland and the "distant islands of the sea,"—we came to the old house of Tangwick, for some generations the residence of a family of the name of Cheyne. From this we had a fine view of the great Dorholm, already mentioned, with its magnificent archway (fit portal for the entrance of the ancient sea-kings), and then proceeded onwards by the fishing and curing station of Stenness, where we saw an immense amount of ling put up in clamps and steeples, but of these, though admirably split and salted,

the hope of perfect cure during such a late period of so moist a season was problematical.

The pasture along a considerable portion of Esha Ness is beautiful, being composed of the finest turf. "The verdure that embroiders this proud bank," says Dr. Hibbert, "on which numerous sheep continually feed, pleasingly harmonises on a calm day with the glassy surface of the wide Atlantic; nor is the pleasure less perfect when the smooth coating of so luxuriant a green turf is contrasted with the naked red crags that form the precipice below, whitened with the spray of the breakers which continually dash against them with angry roaring. The rich surface of pasture that thus gradually shelves from the elevated ridge of the coast, bears the name of the Villains of Ure, and well might we apply to this favoured spot of Thule, the compliment that has been often paid to some rich vale of England, 'Fairies' joy in its soil.'" It forms a sheep walk of Mr. Cheyne's, and is enclosed by a kind of Chinese wall of circumvallation.

Riding along the verge of the cliffs we came suddenly upon one of the most extraordinary inlets

we had yet beheld, even in this land of rent and rocky shores. It is extremely narrow, and runs a long way up into the land, being bordered on both sides by dark perpendicular rocks of towering grandeur and most savage form. The sullen sea fills up the bottom, with a beach at the upper extremity, overhung by a broken precipice adorned by a covering of the richest coloured moss and lichens. There is no access to it from above, the whole, except where the heaving ocean enters, being encompassed by the steepest overhanging walls of rock. This long and dismal chamber is known by the name of Frangord Gio, and presents one of the most magnificent examples of what we may call the double precipice, so characteristic of the wildest and most peculiar feature of Shetland scenery.* We stood, without dismounting, within a hair's-breadth of its horrid jaws, listening with delight to the thunderous voice of many waters, as wave after wave rushed inwards, broken

* The natives still habitually use the Scandinavian term Gio or Geo (pronounced hard like *Ghio*) to express a deep narrow inlet of the sea, such as a boat might enter. Voe signifies a more capacious harbourage, adapted to the reception of a vessel. Wick, as elsewhere noted, is an open bay.

and discomfited as they struck the giant barriers, but still pouring onwards their tumultuous and undaunted forces, converted suddenly from dark upheaving ponderous swells to surges white as snow. It was indeed an impressive, almost an appalling sight, to one not much accustomed to such elemental war, to view that dread contention, while

> " A universal hubbub wild
> Of stunning sounds and voices all confused,
> Borne through the hollow dark, assaults his ear."

As we rode onwards over the smooth turf of the green pastures, so far uplifted over that multitudinous sea, we perceived the surface of the ground, and sometimes the air above our heads, pervaded by large rolling masses of foam, carried upwards by the wind, and resembling heaps of wool. At this time also we perceived two seals, at different places, making their way through the raging surf below. What a deafening day they must have of it, amid such an almost everlasting roar!

Ere long we came to an elevated inland lake, called Houland, in which there seemed to be an artificial holm, bearing the ruins of one of those ancient burghs, known under the name of Pictish towers.

This lake gives rise to a stream which turns no less than three mills in the course of a very short

and rapid descent, after which it throws itself over a fall of some sixty feet or upwards, into a yawning gulf which opens into the smooth pasture-hill, and through which to our astonishment we beheld the briny waves of the sea rolling in, to mingle with and absorb the sweeter waters. Over this the rocky heap and superincumbent turf of the original surface of the hill is smooth and unbroken, forming to a stranger's eye an unknown natural bridge or perforated mound, standing on which we had a yawning chasm on either side, the in-

visible sea passing beneath our feet, entering on the one hand with a boisterous roar from the more open ocean, and after winding like a huge serpent through a subterranean passage of a hundred yards or more, reappearing inwards through the inland chasm, where it meets the waters of the fall with a subdued and sullen murmur. These peculiar perforations are called the Holes of Scraada, and we viewed the general scene with wonder and delight, although, had we seen it during a winter storm, when the wild waves are rushing in impelled by the unimpeded fury of the western blasts, we doubt not the effect must have been astounding both to ear and eye,—for the vexed waters, when forced through the lengthened cavern's jaws, are said to spring upwards in a lofty column from the inland gulf. There is thus, at the same time and place, a continuous cataract of river water, and an ascending spire, of a more intermittent nature, from the briny deep. Some months ago a man fell over the cliff upon the southern side, and though not much the better of it, he is still alive. A still more extraordinary occurrence took place some years ago,—a whale having been forced, by the irresistible rush of waves, into and through

the subterranean channel, above which it was found in the inland chasm, just beneath the water-fall.

Our next locality was the Point of Burr, from which we visited another very remarkable scene called the Grind (or gate) of the Navir,—in reference to which Dr. Hibbert has observed as follows :—" But the most sublime scene is where a mural pile of porphyry, escaping the process of disintegration that is devastating the coast, appears to have been left as a sort of rampart against the inroads of the ocean;—the Atlantic, when provoked by wintry gales, batters against it with all the force of real artillery,—the waves having in their repeated assaults forced for themselves an entrance. This breach, named the Grind of the Navir, is widened every winter by the overwhelming surge, that, finding a passage through it, separates large stones from its sides, and forces them to a distance of no less than 180 feet. In two or three spots the fragments which have been detached are brought together in immense heaps, that appear as an accumulation of cubical masses, the product of some quarry."* This quarry-like aspect is indeed one of its most peculiar features,

* *Shetland Islands*, p. 528.

and adds greatly to its character of desolation, by suggesting the idea that

"Here in old times the hand of man hath been,"

though all is in a strictly natural state. We have nowhere seen the moving power of water more forcibly displayed. The rocky wall in which the breach is made is itself the crown of a sloping cliff descending sixty or seventy feet into the sea, and when the waters rush into the gap it is not alone from the sides of the Grind that the stones are dislodged, but also from the flooring of the great stony opening to which they thus gain access, and not a winter passes without adding a new covering of these gigantic masses to the inland heap. The natural tendency of the rock seems to be to rend or split into great tabular portions, and they are thus lifted and carried onwards from year to year from the rocky floor. We saw several which were already half started from their beds as if by quarriers' tools, and are thus prepared for being turned over by some tremendous wave. Many of them, several tons in weight, were now lying heaped upon each other in the wildest disarray, at a distance probably of not less than 200 feet from the opening of the Grind.

Passing the school-house of the Society before named, we had the pleasure to see a number of well dressed boys and girls, and others of both sexes of maturer years, emerging from it.* We then concluded our detour by a rather desperate scramble through the bogs, in a thick mist with drizzling rain, and the shades of night closing around. However, our sagacious sure-footed shelties brought us in safety to the pebbly shore, and we speedily got on board the Princess Royal,

* The advantages of elementary instruction are highly appreciated and as widely diffused in Shetland. In the slight and passing sketches which compose the present volumes we cannot be expected to enter into those substantialities of deeper import which compose the character, or illustrate the condition of a people,—but it is a curious as well as an interesting fact that in respect to universality of elementary education the Shetland parishes stand at the head of all our northern districts. It appeared some years ago that out of a population of 29,392, only 107 persons of all ages above six years, and 28 betwixt six and twenty years of age, were unable to read. The proportion of the untaught is infinitely greater than this in all the Highland mainland parishes, as well as throughout the Western Islands and Outer Hebrides. See Report by the Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (May, 1833), compiled from the Parochial Returns, and entitled—*Educational Statistics of the Highlands and Islands.*

where surrounded by domestic comforts it was pleasant to reflect upon the wonders we had seen, the prevailing impression being that of the immediate exercise of some unearthly supernatural power, so remote from all our ordinary associations were the lurid rocks and foaming surges, the tall aspiring stacks, and mystical mysterious Drongs, themselves the throne of Chaos, fixed 'mid that wasteful deep:—

> "With him enthroned
> Sat sable vested Night, eldest of things,
> The consort of his reign; and by them stood
> Orcus and Ades, and the dreaded name
> Of Demogorgon; Rumour next and Chance,
> And Tumult and Confusion, all embroil'd,
> And Discord, with a thousand various mouths."

On the morning of the 30th of August we made a purchase of some cured tusk for home consumption, and prepared to take our departure outwards across St. Magnus' Bay, our destination being Papa Stour. The day was bright and beautiful, though there was wind to spare, and the sea though clear, and brilliant in its sunny contrast of emerald green with ever and anon a breaking crest of snowy whiteness, was yet in a state of great turmoil. Nothing that we know of lies between the

mouth of St. Magnus' Bay and the western world, commonly called America. Soon after getting under weigh we encountered a tremendous sea, but whatever some of the landsmen might think of it before it came, the Cutter bounded over it cheerily, though we were obliged for a time, owing to the breadth and depth of the swell, to manœuvre a little to meet the approach of each successive wave.

> "So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
> Down sank a hollow bottom, broad and deep,
> Capacious bed of waters."

Looking backwards from time to time we enjoyed the view of Hillswick Ness, with its bright red porphyritic veins, the insulated Drongs and Stacks, and the green upland pastures which we had so recently indented with the horny hoof of shelties. On our larboard side were now the bright coloured shores of the island of Mickle Rooe. When off Swarbeck's Head we could descry to the eastward Little Papa, and leaving to the leftwards Onzie and Burra Firths, with other isles and inlets, and then passing the Frau-Stack, and some picturesque ranges of rocks, full of dark indented caverns, we entered Housa Voe, in the

island of Papa Stour. Here our Shetland pilot, who bore a high name for sagacity and experience (but whom we had found very cold and unaccommodating, if not positively sulky and inconsiderate) grazed the Cutter's bottom over a shingly bed in eleven feet of water, she herself drawing eleven feet and a half. We then cast anchor in the voe or bay, around which there seemed a considerable extent of cultivation, — the dwelling-house of Mr. Henderson being on one side, and an extensive fishing and curing station of Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie on the other,—with, higher up in the centre, a little town of cottages and church.

The inhabitants were soon on the alert, apparently excited by the entrance of the Cutter. Papa Stour is the only island in which a practical knowledge of the ancient Norwegian sword dance has been preserved from former times, and where its performance still beguiles the tedium of long winter nights. Being anxious to witness this curious custom of the days gone by, we made inquiry regarding its efficient actors, and soon found that the *dramatis personæ* might be speedily assembled. An old fiddler and a bottle of whisky were potent spells. While the Norse warriors

were gathering themselves together from various parts of the island, we accompanied the Secretary in the Cutter's boat, to inspect the Frau-Stack, and other rocks we had previously passed upon our entrance. This Frau-Stack is an insular crag, steep but not altogether precipitous. On its summit are the remains of a ruined building, and its name of Lady's Rock accords with the following tradition. The Laird of Papa to preserve his daughter from the addresses of her lover, a certain Udaller of Islesburgh, built the keep in question, but as the lady sat knitting one fine evening at the window of this her sea-girt prison, by some accident or other she let fall her clew of worsted, and on drawing it up she found a stronger cord attached to it. Continuing to draw the latter, she next discovered a stout rope, which she still continued to upheave, probably from mere curiosity, till to her astonishment, she at last found her lover adhering tenaciously to its other end. This proves how difficult it has always been to build a nunnery, when even knitting stockings is a dangerous thing.

One of the most curious natural objects on this side of the island is a tunnel or natural excavation,

in the form a long and sinuous passage through projecting cliffs. Boats may thread their way through it in calm weather, but although on the lee-side of the island there was yet a heaving swell, and our oars, moreover, were too long to be of any use within its narrow jaws. We might have entered the mouth, but would assuredly have stuck in the gullet; so we satisfied ourselves with the external view. The entrances are extremely picturesque, the rosy-hued rocks being covered with richly tinted sea-weed below, while lichens and many-coloured moss prevail above. On re-entering the bay we landed upon a rude pier near the fishing station. Such of the herring barrels as we inspected contained many spawned fish, the fishery here as elsewhere in Shetland being post-poned till the conclusion of that for cod and ling. From a gently rising eminence in the vicinity may be enjoyed an extensive view of various rocks, stacks, and islands, and of the strangely indented shores of the greater portion of St. Magnus' Bay. The island of Papa Stour is about a couple of miles in length by one in breadth. It forms with the far Foula, and two districts of the mainland of Shetland, the ecclesiastical parish of Walls.

Now came the tug of war. We set some cooper lads to work, and cleared out sundry empty barrels and other lumber from a tolerably large storeroom, to make way for the Norse swordsmen, and a fiddler whom we perched on the top of a tall cask. The room had no windows, and when the door was even partially closed, to prevent the intrusion of a too numerous and floor-encumbering audience, was as dingy as Erebus, but we had brought with us and stuck into various crevices of the cobwebbed walls a supply of wax candles, which threw the light

> "Whose beauty gilds the more than midnight darkness,
> And makes it grateful as the dawn of day."

We believe that in ancient times the sword-dance was simply a representation of heroic exercise, but at an after period, through the influence of more southern settlers, it became combined with a kind of dramatic personation of the seven champions of Christendom,—St. George assuming the character of master of the ceremonies. At least so it was on the present occasion. Our champions consisted of the requisite number of stout active men of various ages and dimensions, some being fat and short, others strong and tall. Our sensa-

tions during the exhibition were of a very mingled nature, probably owing to the fact that of the many thousand steps which we saw danced one of them may have been that which conducts from the sublime to the ridiculous.

The floor being cleared for action, and a select company assembled with their backs to the wall, the fiddler mounted his barrel, and striking up a stave, St. George entered with a straightened portion of a herring hoop in his hand, to represent a sword. Bowing his head and body, and scraping the ground with one of his hind legs, he then gave utterance to the following prologue :—

" Brave gentles all within this bow'r,
If ye delight in any sport,
Come see me dance upon the floor ;—
You, minstrel man, play me a porte."

He then toddles about the floor for a few seconds, with a shifting motion of the feet, the toes turned well inwards, and making a low sweeping reverential bow to the assembled multitude, the music ceases.

" Now have I danced with heart and hand,
Brave gentles all, as you may see ;
For I've been tried in many a land,
In Britain, France, Spain, Italy.

I have been tried with this good sword of steel,
Yet never did a man yet make me yield."

He then feigns motion as if he drew his sword, that is to say he raises his piece of herring hoop, flourishes it in the air, and continues his bold recitative:—

"For in my body there is strength,
As by my manhood may be seen:
And I, with this good sword of length,
In perils oftentimes have been.
And over champions was I king,
And by the strength of this right hand,
Once on a day I kill'd fifteen,
And left them dead upon the land.
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care
To play to me a porte most light,
That I no longer may forbear
To dance in all these gentles' sight."

The musician, who meanwhile with the other Christian champions has just had a caulker of whisky, again strikes up, the master bows, dances, and recites,

"Brave gentles all be not afraid,
Although my sight makes you abased,
That with me have six champions stay'd,
Whom by my manhood I have rais'd.

For since I've danced, I think it best
To call my brethren in your sight,
That I may have a little rest,
That they may dance with all their might;
And shake their swords of steel so bright,
And show their main-strength on this floor,
For we shall have another bout,
Before we pass out of this bow'r.
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care
To play to me a porte most light,
That I no longer may forbear
To dance in all these gentles' sight."

The music again resounds from the top of the cask, St. George goes it for a few seconds with heel and toe, and the champions make their appearance, being successively named and eulogised by the master as they enter the ring. They were clad in their best attire, though their coats were doffed, their shirt-sleeves being as white as snow, and their faces radiant with the flush of victory.

"Stout James of Spain, come in our sight,
Thine acts are known full well, indeed,
And champion Dennis, a French knight,
Who shows not either fear or dread.
And David, a brave Welshman born,
Descended of right noble blood,
And Patrick too, who blew the horn,
An Irish warrior, in the wood.

Of Italy, brave Anthony, the good,
And Andrew, of fair Scotland knight ;—
St. George of England, here, indeed !
Who to the Jews wrought mickle spite :
Away with this ! Let's come to sport,—
Since that ye have a mind to war,—
Since that ye have this bargain sought,
Come let us fight, and do not fear.
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care
To play to me a porte most light,
That I no longer may forbear
To dance in all these gentles' sight."

The fiddler again shakes his elbow, the master capers demurely (another glass of whisky, though not essential to the spirit of the drama, is at this time swallowed in a sort of by-play), flourishes his hoop, and addresses himself to each of his companions.

" Stout James of Spain, both tried and stour,
Thine acts are known full well indeed,
Present thyself upon the floor,
And show not either fear or dread ;
Count not on favour for thy meed,
Since of thy acts thou hast been sure ;—
Brave James of Spain, I shall thee lead,
To prove thy manhood on the floor ! "

St. James was a tall, shy, rather awkward-looking man of about five-and-forty, with a low

forehead, smooth pressed hair, long legs, and short shrivelled trowsers. He enters the circle, makes his bow, waves his hoop, dances to the playing of the porte, and retires. The master continues :—

"Stout champion Dennis, a true knight,
As by thy manhood may be seen,
Present thyself here in our sight,
Thou true French knight, that bold hast been
Since thou such valiant acts hast done,
Come let us see some of them now,
With courtesy, thou brave French knight,
Draw out thy sword of noble hue."

St. Dennis was the shortest and fattest of all the champions, and presented the least resemblance to a Frenchman. He was shaped exactly like a barrel, being extremely round before, and not less round behind. Like all squat people, he danced with the most rebounding activity, although his inexpressibles were rather too tight. He then waved his wooden scimitar, and withdrew. St. George *loquitur*.

"Brave David a bow must string,
And, big with awe,
Set up a wand,
Upon a stand,
And *that* brave David will cleave in twa."

St. David was a dry, disconsolate-looking man

of seven-and-thirty or thereby, like a person who without any strong natural affections, had long fancied that in early life he had met with a disappointment in love. He never smiled, and always swallowed his whisky as if it had been so much sour crout in a state of liquifaction, making one inclined to say—"Don't take it, my lad, unless you like it." He would have taken it, however, notwithstanding. St. David draws, flourishes, dances, and retires.

"Here is, I think, an Irish knight,
To prove himself a valiant man,
Who has not either fear or fright!—
Let Patrick dance then if he can."

The Irish member now slips into the ring in the shape of a decent, well-shaved, rather bilious-looking, demure young man, whom one would have guessed at once to be a tailor during six days of the week, and a precentor on the Sundays. He wore a white neckcloth, and had a handkerchief sticking out of his breeches-pocket. He likewise draws and dances, looking around with the tail of his eye to see if the minister was in the assemblage. However, he saw only an elder of the kirk,

and went through his *pas-seul* pleasantly. The incantation then proceeds as follows:—

"Thou stout Italian, come thou here,
Thy name is Anthony most stout,
Draw out thy sword, that is most clear,
And fight thou without dread or doubt.
Thy leg shake! bow thy neck thou lout!
Some courtesy show on this floor,
For we shall have another bout
Before we pass out of this bower."

Although, from the terms of the above address, it might be inferred that St. Anthony had entered the ring with less graceful propriety than his predecessors, this want of courtesy would have escaped our notice, but for St. George's intimation, accompanied by a tap of his sword upon the Italian's crown. He was a good-looking, handsome-limbed lad, with mild eyes, and a fair complexion, exhibiting nothing of the sun-burnt swarthy aspect of the south, and we dare say would unwillingly have exchanged the occasional gleaming of his own dark sky for

"The brightest star of star-bright Italy."

He went through his evolutions like the rest.

But now, last though not least, our countryman was called.

"Thou kindly Scotsman, come thou here;
Andrew's thy name, of Scottish land!
Draw out thy sword, that is most clear,
And by the strength of thy right hand;
Fight for thy king with all thy heart,
Fight to confirm his loyal band,
Make all his enemies to smart,
And leave them dead upon the land."

St. Andrew was a florid-complexioned elderly man, with good features, high cheek-bones, dark hair, green eyes, large white teeth, and a brown unshaven chin, which he stroked from time to time with the fore-finger and thumb of his left hand. He rather danced as if he could not help it, and was not always quite sure which leg to begin with, but this might proceed from a modest and amiable timidity, occasioned by the august presence of a foreign audience. He was obviously a carpenter.

There was now a glass of whisky *á la ronde*, after which the champions, standing in rank, with their drawn swords (for we must even call them so) resting over their right shoulders, old St. George again danced a *pas-seul*. He then struck

the sword of St. Dennis, who immediately moved out of the line, danced for a few seconds, struck the sword of his next neighbour, who likewise danced and struck, and so on in succession, till all had tripped the somewhat heavy unfantastic toe. They then ranged themselves in a circle, each man holding his own sword in his right hand, and the point of his neighbour's in his left, and danced around. They then held up their weapons in a vaulted position, passing themselves beneath them under the guidance of the master, and afterwards leapt over their swords, a movement which brings the latter into a cross position, relieved by each dancer passing under his right-hand sword. They are now again arranged in a circle, and dance a roundel with hilt and point as before.

These simple exercises are succeeded by others of a much more rapid as well as complex nature, of which it is less easy to give account. They work themselves in one connected group into various tortuous figures, like the writhings of a huge snake, gradually evolving into a more elementary form, again to assume by sudden springs or dexterous twistings, an elaborate grouping. Then the whole mass of swords and swordsmen revolve

like a spinning-jenny, or the latter leap over their bent weapons like a troop of voltigeurs, while the most high spirited of the party (one or two bottles of whisky are by this time lying in a corner of the floor much exhausted, with the corks out) give utterance to wild unearthly cries, or sudden shouts and screams, and such a turmoil takes place that we at one time deemed ourselves rather in bedlam than in Papa Stour. Yet there is method in their madness, the saltatorial storm subsides, and the lofty domination and direction of St. George become again apparent in their gentler movements. Sometimes they dance back to back, their hands and swords crossed behind them, and then by a twist of the arms they reverse their position, and face each other as before. Sometimes they interlace their swords together, forming an elegant shield of wicker-work, with which each dances in succession, and then every man grasping his own weapon, the fairy structure suddenly vanishes into thin air. These, and a variety of other movements, to which we cannot here do justice, were exhibited before us. At last, St. George, wiping his brows, while even his more youthful companions in the championship are

leaning against the wall with foaming lips and heaving chests, comes forward, and suavely says,—

> "Farewell, farewell, brave gentles all,
> That herein do remain,
> I wish you health and happiness,
> Till I return again,"

the whole of the other heroes repeating the last verse, in the plural number. To this epilogue we responded in fitting terms; and, after a proper acknowledgment of their services, bade adieu to the valorous combatants. The exhibition was really an animating one, and not deficient in a certain wild gracefulness, in spite of the occasional prevalence of exuberant and uncouth glee. We did not perambulate Papa Stour.

Mr. Couper, an old and respectable fishery-officer, who had accompanied us from Hillswick, had fixed to go home from hence, but changed his mind, and proposed to the Secretary to proceed in the Cutter as far as Scalloway,—and most providentially for us all was it so ordained. Having taken our departure from Housa Voe, we were standing round the south-eastern angle of Papa Stour, with the intention of passing out by Papa

Sound, when our pilot ignorantly attempted to take us by the narrow and impracticable channel between Forwick Holm and the former island, that is, by a passage which, at all times bristling with jagged reefs, is almost dry at low water. We were going at a great pace with a heavy press of sail, and a few more lengths of the Cutter would have brought her irremediably upon the rocks, and when we knew the fact that only three weeks preceding, a *fishing-boat* had been wrecked by attempting to pass over, and had been knocked to pieces, it is easy to imagine what would have been the speedy fate of the Princess Royal. Mr. Couper, scarcely able to credit his eyesight, sprang forward to the pilot. "What are you about? Are you for going through there?"—"To be sure I am,—the passage lies on this side of Sandness Holm."—"So it does," replied Couper, "but look to the island on your lee,—that is Sandness Holm, and this is Forwick!"—"Ay, I daresay you are right," grumphed out the unwilling pilot, with a cry of "Starboard!" to the man at the helm. Our captain, who, properly trusting to the pilot, knew nothing of what was going on, could not at first comprehend

the nature of the movement, and thought the vessel was about to be run upon Forwick Holm, instead of through the supposed Sound; but no sooner did he learn the true state of affairs, than "Up with the helm!" was his loud and instantaneous cry. "Hard up, sir," shouted the steersman; and about she went, and we were saved from the disaster of shipwreck. A few seconds more in the way we had been going would have fixed us hard and fast upon the reef, and the heavy swell that was then rolling over it would have knocked the Cutter's bottom out in two or three surges. Though near the shore, the peril of life would have been great,—the destruction of the beautiful Princess Royal certain. So we were deeply grateful to the over-ruler of all things for this escape.

Though the wind was light, the sea was heavy (from the gale of the preceding day), as we beat our way through the proper channel, and cleared the headlands on either side. Our confidence in our pilot being somewhat shaken,* we were all

* To prevent misapprehension, it may be proper to state that John Hill (formerly named), who had so skilfully conducted us

well pleased that Mr. Couper was still on board. He had dwelt for a considerable time on the outer coast of Shetland (now upon our left), and was acquainted with every rock and cranny. The western end of Papa Stour is bold and picturesque, and the coasts of Sandness, on the mainland of Shetland, are likewise lofty and precipitous. Behind Deepdale, the ground rises to the height of nearly a thousand feet. Here a large vessel once went ashore, having first struck upon the rocks of Havre de Grind, off Foula, and then drifted hither,—all on board perishing, with the exception of a single man, who was miraculously pitched upon a ledge of the rock, from which he contrived to clamber to a place of safety.

We agree with Ovid, or Oppian, or whoever it was who said of old, "In mari multa latent," and sometimes consider almost covetously, the unsunned treasures of the insatiate deep. On one of the out skerries, near Whalsey, a richly

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from the Clyde, along the western shores and Hebrides, though still on board, was in no way responsible in the affair above alluded to. We had taken in, for greater security as we deemed, a local pilot from Lerwick, to see us through the Shetland Isles.

freighted vessel, named the Cameleon of Amsterdam, bound to the East Indies, was wrecked in the year 1664. She contained many chests of coined gold, and three millions of guilders,—of no use whatever either to cod or ling.

Our view at this time of the great mountainous island of Foula, in the south-western distance, its grand Alpine outline so nobly yet delicately brought out by the approaching sunset, was extremely fine. Indeed the whole coast of the Shetland main was this day seen to great advantage, and as we sailed southwards with a light though canvass-filling air, and a heavy sea breasting that iron-bound shore, the effects, though wild, were magnificent. On passing the northern entrance to Vaila Sound, the western sky was in a blaze, for now

> "The weary sun had made a golden set,
> And by the bright track of his fiery car,
> Gave promise of a goodly day to-morrow."

The northern entrance, just alluded to, though of inviting aspect, being difficult, if not dangerous, as beset with rocks, we glided onwards in search of the southern one, which we soon descried by means of the twinkling star-like lights

of boats proceeding outwards to the herring fishery. We then made our way into the intricate anchorage of Vaila Sound, the cliffs as usual towering darkly above us, and the white surges roaring against their adamantine bases, and climbing their furrowed sides in fleecy spray.* We dined gratefully, *sero sed serio*, at half-past nine.

The morning of Tuesday, 31st August, was magnificently clear and bright, presenting a broad expanse of deep blue sky, with here and there a castellated range of clouds, white as the stainless snow. Beautiful indeed were the green pastures, and the surrounding shores, all tranquilly reflected from the surface of still waters. The air itself was so calm and silent, that we almost fancied we could hear the nibbling of the sheep as they cropt the sweet herbage of the hills, and no other sound was audible, save from time to time the creaking of an oar, as with far-flashing light some weary fisher's boat was seen crossing the entrance to the Bay, leaving behind it a long and lustrous wake. As it was almost dark when we entered last night,

* Sir T. D. L.'s *MS. Journal*, p. 118.

and we had gone below before casting anchor, we were not aware into what a beautifully land-locked place of shelter we had glided, encompassed by low, green, kindly-looking hills, which presented in their mild serenity a pleasing contrast to the rocky battlements by which the outer coasts are guarded. Over a projecting point we could see the tall mast of a vessel with the tri-color flag of France flying from its top. Where, alas! was now the stainless pennon, with its *fleur-de-lis?*

One of the green hills by which we were protected from the fiercer inroads of the injurious sea was the island of Vaila, but so connected was it with the other ranges as to lose from this particular point of view its insular aspect. There were no less than nine fish curing stations around our anchorage. On the Vaila shore there is a commodious dwelling (the property of Mr. Scott of Melby, we believe,) with curing houses near it, all recently occupied by a London fishing company, Messrs. Wilcox and Anderson, who are, however, withdrawing their interests in the concern. We found upwards of fifty tons of fish in progress of cure in this quarter. It is clear that the most advantageous fishery for the Shetlanders is that

of cod, tusk, and ling. For these, when dried, the market in Spain alone is unlimited, and a remunerating price certain, whereas the sale of herrings (to say nothing of the precarious capture) is subject to much fluctuation. It is of great consequence then to prolong the fishery of the first named kinds, so long as the weather admits of their being both caught and cured. It is by no means improbable that good herrings might be discovered during the winter season, in one or other of the many sheltering voes.

In spite of the temptations from without, the Secretary was obliged to occupy himself for some hours by business in the cabin, so we ourself made an incursion shorewards, rod-in-hand. We landed on the gently sloping beach, near the mouth of a smooth flowing rill, which made its way through some meadow land from a screened expansion somewhat higher up, in which we expected to find a lake of fresh water. To the right was an unaspiring kirk, grey and solemn in its leafless solitude, the "mouldering heaps" seeming themselves but mimic representations of the verdant natural slopes by which they were surrounded.

> "How sweet were leisure! could it yield no more
> Than 'mid that wave-wash'd church-yard to recline,
> From pastoral graves extracting thoughts divine."

But we had promised the Captain a dish of trouts for dinner, so we proceeded onwards, and ere long found a placid loch lying just where we expected it should be. There was a want of wind for every thing excepting beauty, but we took advantage of a gentle breathing which here and there rippled the glassy surface, and with three choice flies we killed in a couple of hours thirteen excellent loch trouts. No sea-fish had yet ascended the fresh waters. We rejoined the Cutter by one o'clock.

The Secretary paid a visit to the French vessel, to enquire into their mode of cure, and general practices in relation to fishing business. He found her a rather nice craft, of about five-and-forty tons, the Thea of Gravelines. The skipper was not on board, but he was politely received by the master, a fine old man, and a crew of eight good-looking fellows. The deck was covered with excellent herrings, the best he had seen in Shetland, all caught by the natives, and gutted and cured by native women, who were busily occu-

pied in their vocation. This vessel had been at Dunbar during the preceding season, purchasing fresh fish, and curing them on board in the same manner. As they are forbidden the free importation of what they do not catch themselves, they probably soil their nets before returning home, and their deck and gunnel were already bespangled like the firmament.

This western portion of Shetland, from Papa Stour to Vaila isle inclusive, pertains to the parish of Walls. It is divided into four ecclesiastical portions, — viz. Walls, Sandness, Papa Stour, and Foula. Each division has a church, and each church its elders and annual sacrament; but as there is only one minister to the whole, divine service is performed in the different churches in rotation,—in Walls once a fortnight, in Sandness and Papa once a month, or in summer occasionally once a fortnight. A pastoral visit is paid to Foula only once a year, the minister remaining in the island for a couple of Sabbaths, and preaching frequently during his sojourn. As it contains some hundred inhabitants, it is to be regretted that they should not enjoy a more frequent or continuous ministration. We believe, however,

that in the unavoidable absence of the clergyman, each church obtains the services of a reader, who every Sabbath delivers a sermon to the people, and aids them in their spiritual exercises.

We now stood out of Vaila Sound, making our exit by the same southern passage by which we had entered the preceding night. We could distinguish the curing stations here and there by the stacks, or steeples, as they are technically called, of salted fish, piled up along the shore. Ere long, upon our left, was the ruinous burgh of Culswick, one of those mysterious Scandinavian towers, like that of Mousa, but now much dilapidated for the purpose of obtaining stones for building houses.* It stands upon an eminence over a lofty range of rocks. In the far southern distance we could again descry the bold mountainous projection of the Fitful Head, with innumerable intermediate

* "The name of burgh or beorg," says Dr. Hibbert, "at first implied nothing more than what is explained from the Saxon dialect, *i. e.* a place of defence. But from the circumstance that a beorg or fortress was an usual appendage to towns, is transmitted to us the name of burgh, which in more modern Saxon stands for the town itself."—*Description of the Shetland Islands* p. 256.

islands, separated from each other and the Shetland main by narrow sounds. After rounding the head of Vaila to our right there appeared some splendid scenery in connection with it,—bold cliffs and single rocks of infinitely varied form, some of them worn away into tall fantastic arches, through which the waters of the ocean flowed. On looking backwards in the direction from whence we came, we enjoyed a view not only of the entrance into Vaila Sound, but also through the deep dark indentation of Gruiting Voe, which afterwards expands into a spacious harbourage where the united navy of Britain might ride in safety. The headland which opened on us as we proceeded southward was bold and picturesque in itself, with a fine adjoining holm called the Rump, and slender Stacks between, one of them surmounted by a kind of triple crown. The vessel was all the while making her way swiftly though serenely through the most translucent water, with a light continuous air, and numerous boats were coasting from creek to creek, or striking outwards to the fishing ground, the whole coast from point to point being at the same time seen with almost magical clearness under the cheering influence of

the brightest sunshine. Although it was now within a few hours of the month of September, and we had left home about the middle of June, this was one of the few truly summer days we had enjoyed throughout the season. We have already noticed the great splendour of the Shetland sunshine, which seems to reserve itself for particular occasions, on which it bursts forth with surpassing glory. Our visit was paid too late to enjoy the peculiar beauty of the nocturnal summer hours, but we are told by Dr. Hibbert, and others, that the twilight of this northern latitude shows little of the demureness under which it appears in southern regions, for here a summer's midnight exhibits so serenely bright an aspect, that the evening and the morning seem insensibly to blend into each other. "Nothing," according to Mr. Edmonston, "can surpass the calm serenity of a fine summer night in these Shetland Isles. The atmosphere is clear and unclouded, and the eye has an uncontrolled and extensive range;—the hills and the headlands look then more majestic, and they have a solemnity superadded to their grandeur: The water in the bays appears dark, and as smooth as glass:

no living object interrupts the tranquillity of the scene, but a solitary gull skimming the surface of the sea; and there is nothing to be heard but the distant murmuring of the waves among the rocks."* Great, however, is the difference in respect to light between the seasons of the year, which remind one almost of the contrasted character of arctic countries,—

> " Whose slotheful sunne all winter keeps his bed,
> But never sleeps in summer's wakefulnesse."

We now entered into that great basin, or rather archipelago, called the Bay of Scalloway. Though its inner shores are in several places deeply indented with sheltered voes, which afford a secure anchorage, it is on the whole so much blocked up by low rocky islands, that very precise knowledge is required for its navigation. We took the narrow passage between Hildasay and Channes Islands, and enjoyed a beautiful view northwards through the opening mouths of various diverging rocky voes, their dark clefts crowned by green and gently outlined hills and fairy knolls, reposing in the mellow light of a declining sun. Leaving

* *Zetland Islands*, vol. I., p. 12.

the larger islands of Burra and Trondra on our right, we speedily opened upon the town and ancient castle of Scalloway, backed by an amphitheatre of hills, and enlivened along the nearer shore by the tall masts and shrouds and flapping sails of various vessels. Taking up a good position, we then cast anchor for the night within hail of a fine Spanish brig. As soon as we had discussed the subject of dinner, we returned again on deck, as if insatiate of the unaccustomed clearness of the sky, and the general amenity of the surrounding scene. And now another glory of the heavens had uprisen in silvery splendour, and truly nothing could be more beautiful than the mild lustre of moonlight on that quiet sea, and softly blended landscape, the lofty unscreened battlements of Castle Scalloway casting over the lonesome pastures an almost monumental paleness, while beneath and around us lay a rival heaven of countless sparkling stars reflected from the deep mirror of unmoving waters. Some one supposed a resemblance to the Bay of Naples, but no dread volcanic glare threw lurid light along the silent shore, nor time-wasting city showed unhallowed fires. What said, or seemed to say,

that tranquil night, when about to yield unto the dawn of day?

> " Lo! I was fair, and such as I have been
> My issue shall be. Lo! I cast abroad
> Such affluence of glory over earth,
> That what had been but goodly to the sight,
> Was made magnificent, what had been base
> Showed forth a lustrous beauty,—in all this
> Was I thus rich, and that which I possess'd
> To-morrow shall inherit. False as hope!
> *To-morrow's heritage is cloud and storm.*"

When we looked around us at an early hour on the morning of the 1st of September, a gleamy fitful sunshine still prevailed, but the wind had unfortunately veered round to the southward, so as to meet us in our intended passage outwards through the numerous obstructing isles. It was also blowing fresh, and rather gustily. However, we got under weigh, after discharging our Lerwick pilot, and engaging another from Scalloway, to take us clear of the neighbouring islands, and conduct us into Quendal Bay, near the southern termination of the Shetland main. We met several boats returning deeply laden from the herring fishery, there having been an excellent take during the preceding night. Running through the nar-

rows, we beat our way for a time southwards, in the direction of Fitful Head, but the breeze soon increased to a gale, the scowling sky and angry shore assumed a very threatening aspect, and as Quendal Bay is too open to the south-west to afford a protecting anchorage, and we had no other harbour on our homeward way nearer than the Orkney Islands, which we could not make for long, with such a heavy sea and wind a-head, we determined to bear away and return to Scalloway. This we did, and scudding along at a rapid rate, we speedily found ourselves snug at anchor, though a hurricane, with heavy rain, was blowing overhead. We found that the Spanish brig had got her cargo completed, but from the state of the weather, was unable to put to sea. No fishing-boats ventured to show themselves, and we kept the cabin for the remainder of the day, partly occupied in writing letters and memoranda, partly in dissecting half a dozen herrings, selected to show the various stages of condition, viz. two full fish, with roe and melt developed in the highest degree; two spent fish, thin and flaccid in their external aspect; and two matties, or well grown younger fish, with melt and roe in an incipient state.

2*d September*.—The storm continued unabated all the night, and during the ensuing day. Nothing to be done on deck by those who desired to retain possession of their hats, and it was scarcely possible to go ashore. Several small shrub-like trees were seen within a walled inclosure. They tried to stoop their heads and wave their branches in the wind, but they were evidently destined rather to break than bend, though they did their best, in spite of being dry and stumpy, to impress us with a due sense of Shetland's leafy honours.

3*d September*.—Nocturnal storm as bad as ever, very fierce throughout the morning, but of more moderated rancour towards noon. Went ashore to attempt a few hours angling in the fresh water lochs of Tingwall, which lie between Scalloway and Lerwick, and at a very short distance behind the former. Speedily killed two dozen and ten very fine trout, sixteen of which we slew at eight (not successive) casts, that is, we eight times raised, hooked, and killed a brace of fish at a single throw. Passed an upright monumental stone upon a ridge between the two lakes, which are almost continuous. Observed the people mowing in the marshy meadows, with curious short

straight-bladed scythes and long handles, with which, however, they seem to do a good deal of work. On our way back to the harbour met the minister, a fine old friendly-looking man, who kindly pressed us either to return with him then to the manse, or visit him on the ensuing day.

The descent upon Scalloway, with its lofty castle, an imposing pile, its sheltered bay, and various shipping, with Trondray and other islands closing the sea-ward view, was worthy of remembrance, and was accordingly consigned to the Secretary's sketch-book. Scalloway was of old the capital of the island, and a noted place in Shetland history.* Here the Foud, or chief magistrate, resided, when the country pertained to the Danish crown, and we have already mentioned the small holm, in the Loch of Tingwall, where the assize was held, and the judgments of the Gula Thing revised. The place of execution

* In those days Lerwick was nothing more than a station built with storehouses, &c. for traffic with the Dutch fishermen. The sheriff called our attention to a curious old document, printed by the Maitland Club,—being the resolution of a meeting of the gentlemen of Shetland to raze the whole houses of Lerwick to the ground, owing to its being such a sink of debauchery.

was a neighbouring mount. The court was removed to Scalloway when Shetland came under the Scottish crown. The last who suffered here the extreme sentence of the law were Barbara Tulloch and her daughter, Ellen King, who were both condemned for the crime of witchcraft, and put to death in a cruel manner, early in the eighteenth century.

Up to a comparatively recent period, most of the gentry of Shetland had houses in Scalloway, and Sir Andrew Mitchell of Westshore lived here as a little king. He had a large family of daughters, who taking unto themselves husbands, have been the means of connecting many of the best families of the island with each other. The garden of that gentleman still remains. It is a square walled space, of about an acre in extent. Some apple trees looked thriving in their growth, though fruitless. Their training seemed to have been long neglected, and they grew out like bushes from the wall. The east, west, and south walls, have forest trees planted along their inner fronts,—the kinds being sycamore, ash, and elm. They don't dare to rise much above the top of the dyke, though some of

them are by no means contemptible in their trunks, which measure, we dare say, above two feet in circumference. The sycamores are the best grown, but, alas! these forest veterans are said to be above 170 years of age. We can scarcely, however, form an accurate opinion regarding the possible growth of trees in Shetland, from any of the experiments hitherto made, all of which have been on too small a scale to prove conclusive. Were a good breadth of planting tried in some comparatively sheltered situation, we have no doubt of its ultimate successful growth, although the outskirts might continue dwarfish or even die in early life. A belief prevails that the country in ancient times abounded in wood, and this tradition is in some measure confirmed by observation of certain subterranean ligneous productions. Although scarcely any indigenous trees are now found growing, with the exception of a few dwarf-birches, willows, and mountain-ash, an occasional hazel, some honey-suckles, and hip-briar rose (especially in islets and detached holms, free from the browsing of sheep and cattle), vestiges of ancient wood are to be found intermingled with the peat of almost every parish. In Yell there is frequently to be seen

beneath a mass of moss ten feet in thickness, and resting upon the prevailing rock, a layer of fine rich loam from one to two feet thick, on the top of which are always found some woody remnants, generally of birch and oak.* The same is the case in Bressay, and other islands of the Shetland group. Most of these moss trees, however, are of small dimensions. Timber indeed must have been always valuable in Shetland, but whether it ceased to exist by resigning its leafy honours to the woodman's axe, or died out by some more general climatic change, we know not, and therefore need not attempt to tell. It is known that Ronald of Merca, an illustrious adherent of Harold Harfäger, on the failure of the direct line of his brother Sigurd, first Earl of Orkney, bestowed that earldom (which included Shetland) on his own natural son, Einar. This was early in the tenth century. The said Einar turned his mind mainly to the improvement of the islands, and pointed out to the Orcadians the mode of converting turf to fuel, of which they were much in want, all the wood having been previously consumed. His memory

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 85.

has been ever since perpetuated in the name of *Torf*-Einar. At the same time it seems somewhat odd that he should have sent to Caithness for what we presume must have abounded nearer home.* But if the Orcadians of those days knew not peats, it is probable that the Shetlanders were no better provided for, although the discovery must eventually have opened a vast field of comfort to their delighted eyes, as no coal-wanting country in the world is more amply compensated by its breadth and depth of turfy treasures.

In whatever way the woods of Shetland may have disappeared, it is certain that the country at present exhibits a most bare and leafless aspect. Mr. Edmonston, however, informs us that in one or two gardens sycamore and other trees, planted probably a hundred years ago, have attained the height of 40 or 50 feet, with a girth a yard above the ground of upwards of six feet. Mr. Duncan's residence near Lerwick is adorned by a small though thriving plantation. In Fetlar and North

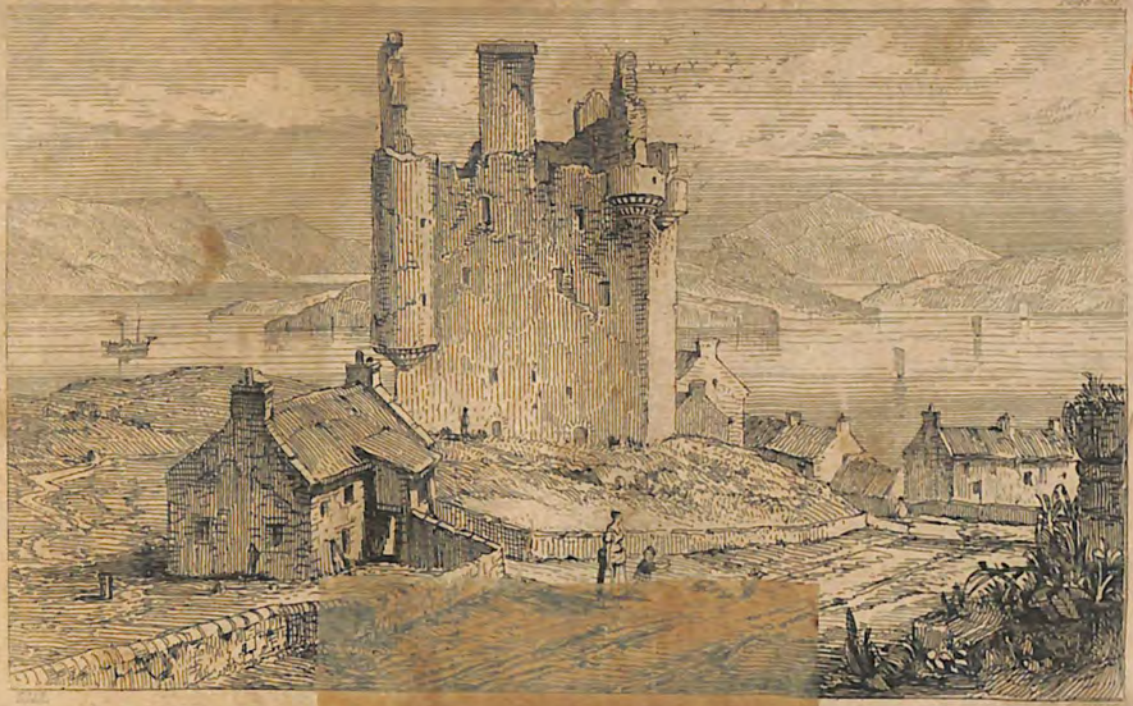
* "Dictus est Einar de cespite, patria lingua Torf-Einar, quod lignorum inopiam cespite bitumenoso, in Torfnesia Scotiæ promontorio effosso, Orcadenses primus supplere docuerit: silvis enim insulæ carebant."—*Rerum Orcad. Hist.*, p. 19.

Yell, says the minister, "a few stunted trees and bushes drag out a miserable existence in some of the gardens. A few apples have grown in the manse garden, also some gooseberries, currants, and strawberries." Some small plantations of ash and willow were made some years ago near the mansion house of Bressay. The former have not kept pace with the latter. Some planes thrive tolerably. In the same vicinity are various plants of aspen, poplar, laburnum, elm, and plane tree, thriving well, but the climate does not seem to favour evergreens. Currants and gooseberries produce tolerably in Bressay, but require the shelter of a wall. Decent crops of strawberries have been sometimes produced. The only hot-house in the country is in this last named island, and it is said to yield an exuberant crop of large grapes.* In the more western parish of Sandsting we are told that apple-trees blossom and bring forth fruit, which, however, have never been seen to reach perfection, although it is otherwise with the smaller kinds, such as gooseberries and currants, which "in good seasons," ripen and are particularly well

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 11.

flavoured. "That trees," observes the Rev. John Bryden, "will grow and attain to a considerable size, if properly sheltered from man and beast, I have abundant proof. In my garden a native mountain ash has attained to such a height, that crows have built a nest in it. And a bower or elder tree also grows in my garden, graced with a crow's nest. In the garden at Sand, formerly the seat of Sir John Mitchell of Westshore, there are plane, ash, elder, rowan, and hawthorn trees, of considerable size. It may be remarked that if plantations are ever attempted, they must be on a large scale, so that the plants may afford shelter to each other; and they must also be protected by a wall, which could not only defend from the encroachments of cattle, but which would also be proof against the inroads of man. For a shrub of the size of a walking-stick, a flail-tree, or a fishing-rod, would prove a temptation too strong for the moral courage of a Shetlander to resist."* Cabbages, carrots, turnips, and other culinary vegetables, thrive well in many of the Shetland gardens.

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxiii., p. 108.



The Castle of Scalloway is a square building, three storeys high, with a round turret on the upper portion of each angle. It is entered by a small doorway, surmounted by a scarcely legible Latin inscription, and passing by a good kitchen and vaulted cellars, a flight of steps leads upwards to the great hall which extends the whole length of the second storey, and must have been a handsome apartment, with a lofty ceiling for those times.* The building itself, however, is now little better than a mere shell, having been despoiled of much of its original beauty when its principal freestones were forced out to supply jambs and lintels to the mansion house of Sand in 1754. It was

* This inscription is said to have been furnished by the clergyman of North-Mavine, probably in bitterness of soul, though the Earl saw not, or affected not to see, the spiritual satire which it poured upon a tyrant who had endeavoured to establish his kingdom in this world by ruling the people with a rod of iron, and holding them under worse than Egyptian bondage. It ran as follows :—

PATRICIUS STEWARDUS, Orcadiæ et Zetlandiæ
COMES, I. V. R. S.
Cujus fundamen saxum est, Dom. illa manebit,
Labilis e contra, si sit arena perit.
A. D. 1600.

erected in 1600, by Patrick, Earl of Orkney, a nobleman of infamous memory on account of his cruel oppression of the Shetland Udallers. It may be here noted that when Shetland was a Norwegian province, its divisional estates were held by what was called *udal* tenures. The original meaning of the term udal, as applied to land, seems to have been *free* or *absolute* property, just as that of feudal signified *stipendiary* property. The latter was originally possessed by military chiefs, and granted by them to inferiors on certain conditions of homage, rent, or personal service; but udal lands did not render their early possessors liable to obligations of either a military or civil nature, as it was only in later times that they became subject to a *scat* or tax, and even this impost was not devoted to the service of a military chief, but to the support of a popular government, of which the king was supposed to be the head. Harold Harfäger was the first of the Norwegian monarchs who imposed a tax or skat upon land. In Shetland, however, this was exacted only from the pasture ground,—the enclosures designed for cultivation being considered as property secured to the free use of the posses-

sor. Hence the former is *scathold*, and the latter *udal*, strictly so called.

But a new order of things resulted gradually from the impignoration of Orkney and Shetland by Denmark to the Scottish Crown in the time of James III. (1470). Great arrears were due to the northern power of the annual payment agreed upon by Scotland for the cession of the western isles, and a lengthened controversy terminated in a proposal to cancel the claim by a marriage between the Scottish Monarch and the Princess of Denmark. Moreover, the Orkney and Shetland isles were pledged to James for 58,000 florins, as a portion of the maiden's dower,—with a stipulation, however, that the natives should retain unaltered their ancient laws and customs. It had previously happened (A.D. 1379) that a failure had taken place in the male line of the Scandinavian Earls of Orkney, on which occasion Henry Sinclair of Scotland, who by a marriage alliance was deemed to have the best right to the earldom, received its investiture from the King of Denmark, on conditions which preserved entire the ancient northern laws of the colony, and the allegiance due to the mother country. However, soon after the impig-

noration above alluded to, James III. induced the Lord Sinclair for the time being to barter his whole right and title to the earldom, in exchange for the castle and lands of Ravenscraig in Scotland,—his Majesty's next proceeding being to annex these islands to the crown.

From 1470 to 1530 the lands and revenues of this northern earldom were leased:—the civil government being committed to the hands of viceroys, and the jurisdiction of the Church to the Archbishop of St. Andrews. A feudal principle was introduced into the holding and transmission of the crown lands in the form of annual tribute called *land-mail*, and of entrance money named *grassum*, from a Danish or Anglo-Saxon term signifying compensation. In the year 1530 a hereditary grant of these crown lands was made by James V. in favour of James, Earl of Moray, his natural brother. When the islanders saw that a feudal superior was thus undisguisedly interposed between them and their sovereign, they took alarm, and headed by Sir James Sinclair, governor of Orkney, rose in arms to resist the innovation. The Earl of Caithness and his kinsman Lord Sinclair, were sent against them, and were not only

withstood by the assembled Udallers, but speedily routed with great slaughter,—the Earl himself and 500 of his followers being slain, and the rest taken prisoners. A pacific arrangement was however entered into between the King and his angry Udallers.

But a much more severe and radical change took place in the nature of these holdings when Queen Mary, in 1565, made an hereditary grant both of the crown lands and superiorities in favour of her natural brother Lord Robert Stewart, the Abbot of Holyrood, in consideration of an annual payment in money. These and other proceedings were quite opposed to the spirit of the national treaty with Denmark, in accordance with which no new conditions affecting property could be introduced into Shetland, which was essentially a Norwegian colony. Queen Mary soon revoked the last-named grant in favour of another to her friend Bothwell (created Duke of Orkney), whose attainder, however, produced the reinstatement of Lord Robert. The latter, to prevent participation of profits, brought about an exchange of his Abbey of Holyrood for the temporal estates of the Bishop of Orkney. As the Church of Scotland was now

under a Prebyterian form of government, he left the merely spiritual concerns to a superintendent, being himself contented with the temporal power. He speedily established a military government, and by a tyrannical and most flagitious policy effected the ruin of a great proportion of the old Udallers. Although recalled for a time in consequence of the notorious scandal of his proceedings, he was not only reinstated in 1581, but had the address to obtain the appointment of Justiciar, which enabled him to corrupt the administration of the laws. He was also created Earl of Orkney and Lord of Zetland.

After various malversations, recalls and reinstatements, he died. His successor was the infamous Earl Patrick, already named as the builder of Scalloway Castle in the year 1600, who during a reign of terror completed by fine and confiscation the ruin of the Scandinavian interest in Shetland. At last, however, the cry of the oppressed reached the royal ear. He was summoned to compear in answer to the complaints of the people. The charges were fully proved, his estates were forfeited, and himself put in sure ward. While a prisoner in Dumbarton Castle he persuaded his

natural son, Robert Stewart to attempt a rising in his favour in the north. This failed, and Robert underwent capital punishment. The Earl himself was afterwards brought to trial, and being convicted of high treason, was likewise put to death.*

By these and other nefarious transactions the udal lands became feudalised, and what seems now extraordinary, the feu charters (*i.e.* illegal aggressions) granted by the Earls of Orkney, even those of the tyrannical Earl Patrick (whose execution took place in 1615) were confirmed by the Crown. "When by the Earl's forfeiture," says Dr. Hibbert (whom we have chiefly followed in these his-

* Scalloway Castle must have been erected very rapidly, as its date of 1600 is that of the very year in which Earl Patrick received his grant. "He compelled," says Mr. Edmonston, "as many of the people to work as he chose, and in order to supply him and his numerous followers with provisions, the peasants were obliged to bring in regularly sheep and cattle to the Castle; and on their failing to produce the articles in kind, they were under the necessity of making up the deficiency in money. This imposition once established, was afterwards recognised as a regular tax, under the denomination of *sheep* and *ox penny*, and it forms an item of the crown rents to the present day."—*Zetland Islands*, vol. i., p. 93.

torical paragraphs) " all the udal lands which had been wrested from their ancient possessors, by the fraud or open violence of the petty tyrants that had been unduly interposed between the sovereign and the udallers, came into the possession of the crown, it would have been an act of clemency worthy the exalted rank of the monarch who then held sway over the united realms of England and Scotland, to have instituted a commission for the purpose of restoring the lands which had been the fruits of evaded laws, and of open rapine. But vainly did humanity intercede in behalf of the poor udallers,—vainly did justice urge the propriety of restitution."* In after years a still more entire subversion of the ancient laws was effected by new governors with other grants, and the introduction of feu-charters by the Morton family, with the subsequent annexation of the islands to the crown in 1669, may be said to have terminated the history of the unfortunate udal-

* *Shetland Islands*, Iter. ii. See also *Memorial against Sir Laurence Dundas*, 1776, signed Isla Campbell (afterwards Lord President of the Court of Session).

lers.* So let us return again to our own concerns.

The season is advancing rapidly, the days shortening sadly, the nights darkening dismally, the winds "lift up their voices," and who can help thinking amid the tossing of tumultuous seas of peaceful sheltered homes, and the still pure welling of domestic life,—sole fountain in the wilderness of this world from which flow not the waters of Marah. So at least by a fond imagining do we often try to soothe the contention of the angry elements, or beguile the tedium of unmoving calms, and thus—

"The shower of moonlight falls as still and clear
Upon the desert main,
As where sweet flowers some pastoral garden cheer
With fragrance after rain:
The wild winds rustle in the piping shrouds,
As in the quivering trees:
Like summer fields, beneath the shadowy clouds
The yielding waters darken in the breeze."

Poetry apart, the quays, curing houses, &c. of Messrs. Hay and Ogilvie are here of the best

* Hibbert, p. 221.

construction, and do great credit to the skill and enterprise of these gentlemen. The white fish we examined were beautifully cured, and the stacks carefully covered with mats. The herring barrels we opened were all cured and packed in a first-rate manner, and some small sized fish, caught during the earlier part of the season, were particularly fine. To show the interest which other nations take in our fisheries, we may here record that the Dutch have a large hospital ship at Lerwick for the purpose of serving the sick,—besides which she is laden with all manner of fishing gear and other stores, so as to be enabled to supply her countrymen with whatever may be essential to their operations. We this day also took a haul or two with the scringe net, at the mouth of a small stream, which empties the waters of the Tingwall lochs into the bight of the bay. We got nine sea-trout, one of them a nice fish of three pounds and half.

4th September.—The wind being now favourable, we were off by four in the morning. However, the air was at first so light, that we were obliged to man the boats to tow us outwards.

By eight, we neared Fitful Head, which is extremely picturesque, presenting a bold and shivered front to the almost ceaseless roar of the wild Atlantic waters, and rising to the height of nearly a thousand feet above the sea.* Looking back from hence, we commanded a good view of the low islands of Burra and Burra Westra, which may be supposed to be the Burgh Westra of the "Pirate," though Sir Walter Scott seems rather to have placed the old Udaller's house upon the main-island. A few other local circumstances of

* Although the modern misnomer of *Fitful* accords well with the variable nature of the clime and country, and is now unchangeably associated with the wild creation of "Norna," the proper name of this fine headland is *Fitfiel*, which signifies *White Mountain* in the ancient language of the country.

a similar nature, of no consequence in themselves, appear to have interfered with the pleasure which the fine imaginings of that magnificent work of fiction would otherwise have produced upon the Shetland mind. Sumburgh Head, with its tall columnar lighthouse gleaming high in air, next opened on our sight, and as we entered Quendal Bay, Fitful Head itself formed a fine lateral foreground, while in the far north-western distance the mountain-peaks of Foula towered upwards from the sea. Numerous fishing-boats were scattered here and there upon the waters, all slender Norway skiffs, extremely buoyant, but of very fragile aspect, when seen tossing and tacking amid the boisterous and exposed turmoil of Sumburgh Roost. We think that the boats in general are poor in Shetland, especially in their rig. They are mostly wherry-rigged,—with two masts, a jib, and two large fore-and-aft sails,—occasionally a square sail when the wind serves.

There is a small island in Quendal Bay called Cross Holm. It is usually covered with sea-fowl. A great fishery here is that of sethe, or coal-fish, taken by means of a coarse artificial fly, made of white feather. The most successful

period of capture is just at the change of tide, that is, when it begins to slacken, and the instant the proper time arrives all the sea-birds leave the Holm, and cover the waters of the Roost, and its attendant run of tide, and the fishermen, watching the fowls, follow in their wake. The birds go in pursuit of the herrings, which the sethe at this time drive up to the surface, and the men go to catch the sethe. These fish are the coarsest and least valuable of the cured kinds. We afterwards saw about twenty-five tons of them drying on the shore, and worth about £10 a ton. They are chiefly shipped to Glasgow, for the use of the poorer Irish. A boat came alongside with cod and ling, taken by hand-lines. We got a couple of cod for sixpence. The men were fine-looking fellows, with fair hair, fresh complexions, fully formed, and tall. The women seem to be rather hardly used in these islands. We have often seen them descending the steep hill sides, bare-legged and shoeless, with heavy basket-loads of peats upon their backs. The excuse may be that the males are almost all fishermen, and consequently occupied during the night in their vocation, while during day they require to dry and

re-prepare their nets. We doubt not that the chief obstacles to agricultural improvement in Shetland likewise arise from this somewhat unsettled mode of life led by the majority of the male inhabitants, all of whom indeed are more or less connected with the occupation of fishing, and many of whom proceed northwards to the whale fishery in Spring.

The inner portion of Quendal Bay presents a semicircular expanse of low smooth sandy shore. Between the leftward side (on entering) and Fitful Head, there is a round shaped lower hill, called the Cleft of Quendal, and from it the country slopes downwards into cultivated fields, with Mr. Grierson's dwelling rising in the midst. On a hillock near the central shore are the remains of the church and churchyard of Quendal. The sandy soil has yielded to the drifting influence of the wind, and now, instead of the green covering of the "heaving turf," the unburied bones of the Udallers lie exposed and bleaching in snowy whiteness. Beyond, and farther eastward, rises a swelling hill, the surface covered with sand, and then, still farther onwards, between it and the hilly ground which terminates in Sumburgh Head,

is a tract of several miles of level country, much covered with sand, and intersected by bays and branches of the sea, particularly West Voe, which runs inland from the south. On this last-named inlet stand the ruins of Jarlshoff.

We landed in a bight of the bay, where a hollow comes down upon the sea from between Fitful Head and the Cleft of Quendal. There were a few cottages close upon the shore, with another and larger collection of small dwellings, about a quarter of a mile higher up. Most of the women and girls were attired in scarlet petticoats, of country made stuff called wadmael. Proceeding farther onwards, we were hospitably received at Quendal House by Mr. Grierson, who introduced us to his family, and pressed us to prolong our stay. But duty called us onwards. However, we walked under his guidance along a smooth and grassy slope, to the Cleft Hill, from which we enjoyed a complete view of the Bay, and all its surrounding features. Looking northwards from this elevation, we saw the Sound which so nearly disconnects the peninsular St. Ninians from the Main. A long continuous grassy terrace extends along the sloping base of the Cleft Hill from Quen-

dal House to a point just above our landing-place. Here Mr. Grierson bade us adieu, wishing us a prosperous voyage back to *Scotland*,—and we observed that all the Shetlanders make use of this distinctive appellation, as if they themselves still dwelt in another country.

We might here have obtained an addition to our live stock, in the shape of a tame cormorant, which we found perched contentedly upon the roof of a fisher's hut. But our heart was too full, from the recent loss of an ornithological pet of great promise, to admit of our running the risk of a second sorrow. We may now mention, that while at Lerwick we took on board a live specimen of the tysté, or black guillimot,—*Uria grylle*. As it could not feed itself, we kept it at first in a fishing-basket, and several times a day pushed various small pieces of fresh fish down its little throat. It soon came to comprehend what we were doing, and as speedily began to do something for itself,—that is, so soon as it found a morsel between its mandibles, it no longer required a ramrod, but gobbled it down like a voluntary. Thus matters throve for several days, and when we put him one fine morning into a bucket full

of sea water, he dived, and splashed, and swam, and filled the air around with sparkling gems, and when taken from his translucent bath, he preened, and dried, and beducked himself, and became a bird beautiful to look upon. Ere long he ate out of any one's hand, or dabbled up portions of juicy herring, when thrown towards him on the deck. He never became a very alert walker, and this was characteristic of his kind, but he would sit upon a good man's knee, and stretch himself up upon his hind-legs, and flap his little wings like a penguin, and was the friend and favourite of all the human race. When he desired to leave his basket, he would raise himself upon his hinder end till he was almost as tall as a little spruce tree, and then he would waddle on to the palm of a person's hand, and sit there flapping his wings as if he was flying at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and then he would rest himself on his abdomen, and shut one eye and wink with the other at the sun, and anon rouse himself to eat a hearty dinner, and finally retire to his fishing-basket to be out of harm's way for the night. But the cabin-boy said from the beginning that he was

" too good to live," and we felt it so ourselves. As he lived happy, so he died lamented. On opening the basket one morning to give him his usual meal, he was found lying much in his usual attitude, upon his breast—but dead. So when we were offered the cormorant of Quendal Bay, a large magnificent bird, with dark yet lustrous plumage, who would almost have swallowed a fish-woman, haddocks and creel together, we remembered the premature fate of the tysté, and forbore. Besides, it is obvious that although captain and crew are all alike obliging, yet live birds are not expedient on board of ship. In calm easy weather, or while lying peacefully at rest in land-locked sheltering bays, they may be rather an amusement than otherwise to all concerned, and are easily attended to; but when what Ossian calls " the foam of the boisterous ocean," is flying in one's face, when waves are swelling, and winds howling, and tides running like raging rivers, and a desolate rocky shore is seen stretching for many a cheerless mile along the leeward bow, then it becomes us not to say to any anxious and experienced seaman, " Have

you fed the gulls?" while, alas! the master of the maws is probably, amid the dread turmoil, altogether incapable of taking care of more than himself, and may perhaps be making but a comfortless job even of that, in which so many most excel. So we declined the scart.

The moment we got again on board the Princess Royal, we weighed anchor, and stood out of Quendal Bay with a fine free wind, and our square-sail set. We were well tossed before we got across the strong tide that sets in upon the Roost of Sumburgh, but although the sea continued heavy even after we had crossed the current, we ran through it magnificently, making our way for the north-westward of Fair Isle. On heaving the log, we found more than once that we were going ten and a half knots an hour. We ran close by the latter isle, and thus had its wild, broken, and strangely scooped out cliffs completely under view. One voe opened from its western side in a most picturesque manner, with a green table-land within it, and a strangely-shaped hummock rising from the south-eastern end, and showing itself in the distance through the chasm, produced

in us a strong desire to see more of this singular island at some future time.*

It was on these barren shores of Fair Isle that the Duke of Medina Sidonia was driven during his flight northwards, by the tempest which so nearly completed the destruction of the Spanish Armada, in the memorable year 1588. In this small island the great Spanish noble (his huge unwieldy ship having gone to pieces), with 200 men, was nearly starved for want of provisions. He afterwards made his way to the house of Malcolm Sinclair in Quendal Bay, in the mainland of Shetland, and eventually landed in safety at Dunkirk. One of the most curious results

* Sir T. D. L.'s *MS. Journal*, p. 128.

connected with the temporary residence in Fair Isle of the foreign sailors, is, that the natives acquired, and their descendants have ever since preserved, a knowledge of the peculiar patterns of gloves and caps worn by the Spaniards, and to this day work them in various-coloured worsteds, exactly resembling the corresponding articles produced at Cadiz. The southern shore showed some sloping flattish land, but in general this lonely isle is high and impracticable in its aspect. It is about mid-way between Orkney and Shetland. The inhabitants are said to be a poor and simple people, amounting (in 1841) to 232. From their exposed situation they find the fishing of tusk and ling at a distance from land disadvantageous, and confine themselves chiefly to the capture of sethe, which is safer and less expensive. About forty tons of the last named fish are usually exported every year to Leith. All the boats (which are very poor concerns) lie in a creek in the southern side of the island. A schoolmaster has been salaried by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

The continuance of the evening breeze drove us swiftly southwards at a rate of about ten knots an

hour. As we approached the Orkneys, we could see numerous cod smacks out fishing. We now bent our course to the eastern side of that important group of islands, but the land is there so low that we saw little of North Ronaldsha, except a tall building intended for a light-house, though never used. This island, though low, has a gentle rising in the centre, which produces slight declivities favourable for the drainage of water, and there being a great intermixture of shell-sand with the natural soil, it is consequently dry. The salt spray must however be very injurious along such unprotected shores. At the same time the greater proportion of the island is in a state of cultivation, and the inhabitants may be regarded as a race of agriculturists, with the exception of a couple of weavers and a tailor. Cod and herring fishery is, however, carried on to some extent. The former are disposed of to a London company with welled smacks,—the latter are conveyed to the curing station in Stronsa. The fisheries of North Ronaldsha are prosecuted at a disadvantage, in consequence of the want of good anchorage, and the exposed nature of the shore. The boats, in bad weather, require to be

hauled on land, or shifted to the lee-side of the island. Another serious misfortune is the want of peats, which these poor people are obliged to bring from the island of Eday, sixteen miles distance. The sheep feed almost entirely along shore, on drift sea-weed and some scanty pasture, being debarred the better ground by a high dike which encompasses the island.*

The neighbouring isle of Sanday is also so low and flat as to be scarcely visible above the waves, although somewhat more elevated in its south-

* The red-necked phalarope (*Tringa hyperborea*), a very rare British bird, especially as a breeding species, visits North Ronaldsha in June, and takes its departure in September. It builds among reeds along the sides of lochs, and lays four eggs of a dingy olive colour, spotted with brown. "It is pretty tame," says the minister, "and allows its motions, which are very graceful, to be observed at a small distance." We may here note that the great auk (*Alca impennis*) once inhabited Orkney. A pair frequented the island of Papa Westra, where they built their nest, but never had young ones, being unable to lay their eggs beyond the reach of the sea. They were long known there by the name of the King and Queen of the Auks. They were both killed eventually, the male coming into the possession of Mr. Bullock. If we remember rightly, the specimen was purchased for the British Museum, on the dispersion of Mr. B.'s collection, for the sum of thirty guineas.

western promontory. It yields no peats. On the north-eastern point, called the Start, a light-house was erected in 1802. It is about 100 feet high, and revolves twice every minute. It is of essential use to mariners, as many vessels were formerly wrecked or stranded here, owing to the lowness of the coast. Having run about sixty miles within the last six hours, we lay to for the night off the island of Stronsa,—with a good deal of pitch and toss, till morning.

At an early hour on the 5th of September the captain went ashore to the harbour that lies between Grueness and the Island of Papa Stronsa. He found several schooners waiting for cargoes of fish at anchor there. The general aspect of Stronsa is low and flat, although the terminal points of Burrow and Rousholm Heads are more bold and rocky, and a moderate ridge runs onwards from north to south. Much cultivation, and numerous houses were in sight. The more western island of Eday (with sundry smaller isles) belongs to the same parish, although there is a church and minister in each division. A great part of Eday is covered with moss, which, though almost incapable of agricultural improvement, is

of immense advantage by affording fuel both to its own inhabitants and the natives of the neighbouring islands. The former have a free right to it, as a pendicle to their tenements, but others are required to pay six shillings a fathom after the article is cut and dried. The so-called fathom, however, is twelve feet long by six in height and breadth. These peats yield the proprietor not far short of £150 per annum.*

The portions of Orkney alluded to in the preceding pages are named the North Isles. As the cure of cod was almost unknown prior to the appointment of fishery officers to superintend or direct the process, the people had no bad habits to get rid of, and it is satisfactory to learn that their fish are already highly thought of in the markets. The minister informs us that in the season of 1840 there were in all 444 tons of cod caught and cured in these North Isles, and sold by the fishermen themselves for about £5400.

We had now to beat against a head wind up the mouth of Stronsa Firth, and into Shapinsha Sound, on our course to Kirkwall Bay. We had

* *New Statistical Account*, No. xxxv., p. 168.

thus an excellent view of this great land-locked central sea, encompassed on all except its eastern side by islands, most of them low and flat, extensively cultivated, and with excellent-looking houses here and there, but exhibiting few features of pictorial interest. The shores of Shapinsha are low and fertile, adorned with numerous fields of grain,—spots of "stationary sunshine" brightening the deeper and more verdant pastures. The central parts of the island are higher and more barren, being only fit for sheep. Straw plaiting for bonnets is carried on by the females, and herring nets are also wrought to some extent. In the north-western distance the island of Rousay raised its somewhat loftier outline, but here, as elsewhere among the southern isles of Orkney, the great Ward-Hill of Hoy formed the most conspicuous and domineering object.

It was after noonday of the Sabbath before we cast anchor in Kirkwall Bay. We proceeded speedily ashore, and were just in time for the church service. The fine old cathedral and some ancient ruins bestow a solemn and imposing character on the town of Kirkwall, itself stretching inwards over the low peninsular land which divides

the bay from Scapa Flow. On either side of that level land rise gently swelling hills, and the fair white walls of many pleasant villas are seen gleaming amid large enclosures of well cultivated fields. We landed near a saw-mill of peculiar structure and position. It is turned by the sea rushing beneath a bridge placed at the termination of a mound which separates a large inundated portion above it from the rest of the bay.* It is furnished with a curious hand-wheel for the purpose of lowering or raising the water wheel to suit the state of tide. The mound itself forms a broad and agreeable walk onwards to the town and harbour, in which were several large schooners and other craft. We soon got into the main street, which is narrow and extremely tortuous, with some curious and apparently ancient houses on either side, divided by small passages. The causeways however were neat, and the fronts of the houses very clean. Entering a larger and more open space, we found

* We believe that the space in question was formerly a fresh-water lake; but by an attempt to drain it, the sea was admitted, and now ebbs and flows through the entrance. • It is called the *Peerie Sea*.—ANDERSON'S *Guide*, p. 650.

the cathedral of St. Magnus rising on the eastern side from rather higher ground.

The Presbyterian service is now conducted in the choir, the large, lofty, dark, discoloured nave being left in mouldering desolation. Many monuments both of ancient and modern times are placed along its sombre walls, or around the bases of its huge supporting columns. The ceiling of the choir, and a portion of that of the main building are beautifully arched, and the lateral aisles are also roofed internally by groined arches. The general style of structure is that of the mingled Gothic and Saxon which prevailed during the twelfth century.

This fine cathedral is believed to have been founded A. D. 1138, by Rognvald, one of the Scandinavian Lords of Orkney, and was dedicated to his uncle, Magnus, the patron saint of the Orcadians. The said Magnus was rather too meek a man for those contentious days, and on going out unarmed to meet one Hacon, who was not only his cousin-germain, but his deadly foe, his head was cut off by an executioner at a single blow. However he was afterwards sainted by the Pope. Rognald (that is Ronald) erected only the central

cross and steeple, the most ancient portions of the building.* Various enlargements were made in after times by the Catholic Bishops of Orkney. The material employed is red sandstone. This remote cathedral necessarily experienced neglect after the period of the Reformation, and was still less regarded on the abolition of Episcopacy, in consequence of Presbyterian poverty if not indifference. However it is understood that the late Mr. Gilbert Laing Meason left a handsome legacy for its repair.

The palace of the ancient Bishops stands near the cathedral, and is now in a state of great dilapidation. A fine old tower still stands conspicuous, with an Episcopal figure (that of Bishop Reid we believe) in a niche of the northern side. If built by the said Bishop, its date must be posterior to 1540, the year of his succession. In its more ancient portion Haco King of Norway died in 1263, soon after the (to him) disastrous battle of Largs.

A little eastwards are the ruins of another

* The existing spire is only a substitute for the original one, destroyed by lightning in the year 1670.

imposing pile. "The Earl's palace," says the minister, "the ruins of which still partly entire, stand near the cathedral to the south-east, was erected A. D. 1660, by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, whose father Robert was a natural son of James V." If we are right in our former dates regarding Scalloway Castle, and the fact that Earl Patrick was executed in 1615, this could scarcely be.* He did however erect the castle, though for good reasons, long before the period first above stated. It is a noble Gothic structure, with a grand old hall, its projected and hanging oriel windows being of sufficient magnitude almost to form a well-sized room in each. But the pride of a few trees has induced some leaf-loving Orcadian to plant within the shelter of its court-yard, and by this means some of the finest architectural portions are screened from view. Now that these trees have grown pretty well up, all those nearest the building should be cut down, so as to allow its

* An authentic record of the Earl's doings and death will be found in SIR ROBERT GORDON'S *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, pp. 299–301, and in SPOTTISWOODE'S *History of the Church of Scotland*, pp. 520–1.

beauties to be seen.* Besides, the felling of timber would be an exciting novelty to the natives. We afterwards enjoyed a fine view of these three buildings forming a single group, from the south side of a neighbouring field encompassed by a wooded walk, used as, and probably intended for, a public promenade. In a lower portion of the town are the dismantled ruins of Kirkwall Castle, built in the fourteenth century by the first Earl, Henry St. Clair.

It is understood that Kirkwall has not been making advances either in prosperity or population during recent years. In 1831 it numbered 3721 inhabitants, who in 1841 amounted to only 3574, being a decrease of 147 in ten years. This stationary or rather retrograde condition has been attributed chiefly to the failure of the trade in kelp, formerly the staple produce of the island,—a result which seems to have been predicted by Dr. Neill nearly forty years ago. "Should a cheap process," observed that intelligent tourist, "for extracting the soda from sea-water happen to be discovered, or should the market for kelp on any

* Sir T. D. L.'s *MS. Journal*, p. 131.

other account unexpectedly fail, the landholders of Orkney will find, when too late, the great imprudence of thus neglecting the cultivation and improvement of their lands."* We are happy to believe that great agricultural improvements have been made in these northern islands since Dr. Neill's visit, and we know that the cod and herring fisheries are much more attended to, and consequently much more productive, than they were about the commencement of the present century.

6th September.—The weather was so stormy during the night, that although it had been our intention to weigh anchor by four in the morning, we were unable to stir till six. We then got under weigh, and having run through Shapinsha Sound, and doubled Moul Head of Deerness, we resumed our voyage southwards. The small islands of Horse, Copinsha, and Corn Holm, were passed speedily, and ere long the mouth of Holm Sound, which we had entered on our way to Stromness, opening before us, we came upon our former course, thus completing, or rather terminating, our short and superficial survey of the Orkney and

* *Tour through Orkney and Shetland.*

Shetland Islands. We all felt deeply that the interest and importance of these insular groups rendered them well worthy of a much more careful and prolonged examination than we had it in our power to bestow. Their close connection with ancient Scandinavian history, and the existence of northern names, and remnants of northern customs and antiquities, tend still to throw something of a wild charm around them. The singular combination of rugged grandeur and pastoral simplicity, or rather the contrast which the blackened battlements of the rocky coasts so often present to the sweet serenity of the verdant pastures by which they are surmounted, exhibits nature under an unusual aspect, while the unfailing civility and social kindness showered upon the stranger, are doubly grateful amid scenes not seldom characterised by an almost savage wildness and sterility. The better classes are polite and intelligent, those of humbler station brave and enduring; and it is known that the proud navies of Britain during the late war were greatly indebted (as our commercial marine, especially the whale fishery, is even now) to their skill and hardihood. Many daring young Shetlanders, distinguished for their

activity and seamanship, are still to be met with in our ships of war, and from the remoteness of their native homes, and the casualties to which their occupation is subjected, it is probable that few return to tell their adventurous tales. During our own brief sojourn, accounts had been received from the Mediterranean fleet of the death of a young man of great promise, destined never more to revisit his ancestral sea-girt isles.

> "He sleeps not where his fathers sleep,—
> Who has a grave more proud?
> The Syrian wilds his records keep,
> His banner is a shroud!"

Great was the influence of these island northmen and their Scandinavian kindred over a large portion of Scotland in former days, and powerful and continuous have been the effects of their courage and audacity even on existing times. What says a wild-thoughted author of the present day regarding the mighty men of old who subdued and inhabited our northern isles? "It was doubtless very savage that kind of valour of the old Norsemen. Snorro tells us that they thought it a shame and misery not to die in battle; and if natural death seemed to be coming in, they would cut wounds

in their flesh, that Odin might receive them as warriors slain. Old kings about to die had their body laid into a ship; the ship sent forth, with sails set, and slow fire burning in it, that once out at sea, it might blaze up in flame, and in such manner bury worthily the old hero, at once in the sky and in the ocean. Wild bloody valour! yet valour of its kind; better I say than none. In the old sea kings, too, what an indomitable rugged energy! Silent, with closed lips, as I fancy them, unconscious that they were specially brave; defying the wild ocean with its monsters, and all men and things; progenitors of our own Blakes and Nelsons. No Homer sang these Norse kings; but Agamemnon's was a small audacity, and of small fruit in the world, to some of them;—to Hrolf's of Normandy, for instance! Hrolf, or Rollo, Duke of Normandy, the wild sea-king, has a share in governing England at this hour." *

Even the modern Gow was a small Vikinger, with a large audacity, in his way; and although he no doubt deserved to be hanged, it is something

* CARLYLE'S *Hero-Worship*.

to have served as the germ to the character of the now undying "Pirate." Another Orcadian hero was "Torquil, the nursling of the northern seas," immortalised in Lord Byron's "Island." His name was George Stewart,—son of Mr. Stewart of Malseter. He went to sea about 1780, and was a midshipman under Captain Bligh, during the famous "Mutiny of the Bounty," though he was ignorant of, and so could take no share in Christian's plans. Being landed in Otaheite, he and a companion, Peter Haywood, lived there with the Indians for nearly two years, till an opportunity offered of their delivering themselves up to the captain of a King's ship, the Pandora. But this vessel, while attempting to find a passage through Endeavour Straits, struck on a coral reef, and, after beating over it, soon after went down in seventeen feet water, when Stewart and four-and-thirty men besides, were drowned. It is of him that Byron writes:—

"And who is he? the blue-eyed northern child,
Of isles more known to man, but scarce less wild,
The fair-hair'd offspring of the Orcades,
Where roars the Pentland with his whirling seas;

Rock'd in his cradle by the roaring wind,
The tempest-born in body and in mind ;
His young eyes opening on the ocean foam,
Had from that moment deem'd the deep his home."

Nor is it only, as Carlyle calls them, men of "an indomitable rugged energy,—silent, with closed lips," that Orkney has produced, if not in bygone, at least in modern days. To Kirkwall alone we owe the noted engraver, Sir Robert Strange, and that sagacious historian of Scotland, Mr. Malcolm Laing.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

We now ran rapidly to the westward of the Pentland Skerries, and making for the Caithness shore, coasted for the second time along that northern county, and entering the Bay of Wick, we landed our fishery inspector, who had accompanied us throughout our Shetland and Orkney voyage. We inferred the conclusion of the herring fishery, from seeing numerous south country boats taking their departure homewards. An Irish fish-carrying brig got under weigh, and a sudden squall striking her, she lost her jib-boom. Having shipped our own boat, we ran southwards along the remainder of the bold cliffy coast of Caithness with a fine breeze, stiff and free, and our square sail set. Unfortunately, however, a thick drizzling rain began to drift about us, and greatly obscured the aspect of affairs. The old

Castle of Wick presented a good subject, when seen from near the shore. Sarclet looked extremely picturesque, and the haven of Whalligoe also exhibited an excellent appearance from the sea. But the rapid rate at which we were going, and the surcharged condition of the atmosphere, gave us, on the whole, but a dim and visionary view of objects during this day's later progress, and Clyth, Lybster, Latheron-Wheel, came like shadows—so departed. The old Castle of Fors loomed from the summit of an isolated rocky hill, rising from the beach, and surrounded by ravines. Dunbeath Castle seemed also to occupy a similar site, though the building is larger, and not in ruins. The valley of Berriedale, guarded at its mouth by an ancient stronghold, bounded behind by banks of young plantations, and backed by swelling hills, is an interesting locality, when looked into from a dull and misty sea.

As we approached the Ord of Caithness, the hills rose with bolder and more lofty fronts of crag from the very bosom of the deep, and in one place a *stack* ascended from the base of a cliff, reminding us of the wild and wave-worn Drongs of Shetland.

The road which is seen leading over the Ord gives rather an Alpine aspect to the scene.

We now came upon the coast of Sutherland, where the mountains are lofty, but retire backwards from the sea, with hollow cultivated recesses on their sides, and openings running inwards here and there. The whole immediate coast on this, the eastern side, is under cultivation, which has been immensely increased within the course of recent years. We then ran diagonally towards Tarbet Ness, taking only a peep at Helmsdale, its ruined Castle, and mountain-bounded valley, through which flows rejoicingly a fair and fruitful salmon stream. We knew that the latter was rented by an old friend, who would have made us welcome either with rod or gun, but we were by this time under too strong a homeward impetus to brook delay. The atmosphere now began to clear considerably, and the rain to fall only in partial showers. Dark stooping clouds were parted by translucent intervening spaces, while contrasted with occasional gleams of light upon the yellow corn fields, the deep purple of the higher and more distant mountains produced a fine effect. The

ducal Castle of Dunrobin showed itself, bosomed among "tufted trees," while, farther onwards, the fair white walls of Dornoch, with its old cathedral towers, caught for a moment the sun's almost expiring rays. Fainter and fainter in the distance was dim old Tain, and the low and sandy mouth of the estuary of the Oikel (called the Dornoch Firth), and other far-flowing rivers of water,—unsafe and shallow haven, abhorred by cods and seamen, but redeemed and even glorified in the angler's eyes by innumerable troops of silvery salmon, bounding upwards from silent depths where ocean lies unmoved, over the yellow sands, and into rushing rocky streams, resounding day and night with ceaseless murmuring voices.

The light-house of Tarbet Ness now showed its "single star" above the darkening deep. The dull dead beating sound of a steamer was heard along shore, her blackened hull and trailing stream of smoke being scarcely discernible through the thickening twilight. The coast of Morayshire was dimly seen like a lengthened purple wave along the far horizon, relieved by a single streak of golden light which told of other regions still blazing in effulgent brightness. The Secretary cast a wistful

gaze towards his former dwelling, and visions of sweet-voiced children on a dewy lawn, and hanging woods gorgeous with autumn's many-coloured hues, and a winding river of softly murmuring water,—alternate sparkling stream with pebbly shore, and rock-encinctured pool of crystal calmness, in which the shadowy counterfeit of nature seemed even more beautiful than nature's self,—all these, and many a home delight with which their undying memory was intermingled, we doubt not flashed upon that "inward eye," which a great poet has declared to be the "bliss of solitude." Alas! that our inward eye should so often find pictured what is painful as well as blessed. Not every mind possesses the alembic power which dwells amid "Rydalian Laurels,"—yet a more elastic self-sustaining spirit than the Secretary's we have seldom known, and so when the faëry splendour of Relugas had passed vividly before him, even as in a dream, he was himself again—

> "A laughing fount
> Of gay imaginations ever bright,
> And sparkling fantasies."

With a turn in the tide, and a change of wind, we made but slow progress onwards from Tarbet

Ness, and having afterwards to beat through the opening of the bold Sutors, into the Bay of Cromarty, we did not cast anchor to the westward of that town till ten at night. We here, and thankfully, received our home despatches, and other letters.

7th September.—A calm and heavenly morning of bright sunshine. Though we had previously at various times witnessed the scene before us, yet when we came on deck in the early serenity of a clear autumnal day, we felt as it were all the freshness of novelty from the beauty of the surrounding bay. The included sea was like a mirror reflecting the cheerful town, and the finely-wooded Sutors, two lofty and precipitous headlands, which, rising on either side of the deep though narrow entrance, exclude the turmoil of the open ocean. To the northwards was the Bay of Nigg, with Tarbet House, and Balnagown Castle gleaming from sheltering woods. Westwards, the village of Invergordon sent up its blue and spiral wreaths of smoke slowly into the tranquil air, and there the waters narrowed, or assumed a fine lake-like aspect, with many a quiet bay and salient point along the indented shores, while

in the far distance, towering over many an intermediate wooded knoll and pastoral upland, rose the huge Ben Wyvis, one of the loftiest of our northern mountains. "The parish," says Mr. Hugh Miller (an honoured native of the same*), "is said to owe its name (*Cromba*, *i. e.* Crooked Bay,) to the windings and indentations of its shores. It is surrounded by a highly picturesque country; and is rich in prospects which combine the softer beauties of the lowlands with the bolder graces peculiar to an alpine district."

The Firth of Cromarty runs for about eighteen miles into the interior of the country, and although characterised by many marine attributes in several even of its higher reaches, it is the first great expansion from the town of Cromarty on the one side, upwards and across to the village of Invergordon on the other, which constitutes that little inland sea,—*Portus Salutis* of the Romans,—so noted as a place of shelter. It is properly regarded by seamen as the safest and most

* Author of "Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland," and of a series of Essays on the "Old Red Sandstone," abounding with original and felicitous descriptions of the nature and attributes of that formation.

commodious harbourage on all the eastern coast of Scotland, and in this respect exhibits a very marked character of contrast to the neighbouring estuary of the Dornoch, the mouth of which at low water is entirely obstructed by sands and shoals. Now, the entrance through the Sutors of Cromarty, we know not whether from the rushing action of the tide, or otherwise, is twice the depth even of the nearer portion of the outer sea, —that is, it is in some places thirty fathoms. This shows the clearing, if not the excavating influence of the ebb and flow, and the total absence of all deposits from above by river water. There is no *bar*, or sand bank, at the mouth of the Cromarty Firth, as there is so frequently at the mouth of estuaries, properly so called; and all geological evidence is against the theory, that the opening at the Sutors is the mouth of a river, or was in any way occasioned or induced by the action of fresh water. Deposits along shore, and banks higher up, have been formed, and are still in progress of formation from such action, but no waters flowing from the interior could ever act upon the barrier of the Sutors, so long as the pent up waters might, in accordance with the

ordinary laws of nature, make their escape so much more easily across by Shandwick Bay to the Moray Firth, or to that of Dornoch by Tain, or even over the Muir-of-Ord (certainly some hundred feet lower than the connected Sutors), into the Beauly Firth. If the Sutors were ever joined together, and were then either suddenly disrupted or more gradually worn asunder, by natural causes, assuredly the Conon waters were not one of these. The Finden, and other sand banks, some distance below the true mouth of the Conon, exhibit the influence of the river deposits, and at the same time show how ineffectual would be that influence in keeping clear so broad and deep a channel as that which pervades the lower reaches, but for the rushing and continuous though alternate force of the falling and flowing tides. The depth of the bed of the lower portions of the Cromarty Firth necessarily altogether withdraws those portions from the action of fresh water, which, from its less specific gravity, floats uppermost, so long as unmingled with saline particles.

Let any advocate of the efficiency of the Conon waters to force their way through the rocky barrier of the conjoined Sutors, cast his eye upon the

said Conon as it enters the Bay of Dingwall at low water, and he will see how small and slender an almost thread-like portion it occupies among the sands and shoals which encumber the navigation of that upland portion. As Dr. Fleming once truly observed to us, the river Conon could not keep itself a clear channel to the Sutors, even supposing it had got the basin ready made. Still less can it be supposed an effective agent in the original formation of that basin. From the high land a little to the south-west of Dingwall a good bird's-eye view may be obtained, useful to those curious in the character of estuaries, and in itself "beautiful exceedingly." There the undisputed Conon may be seen, though partially screened by trees, a fair and flowing river, proceeding from beneath the arches of the distant bridge,—then broken or divided by a furze bank,—still farther separated by numerous weed-covered flats, or sunken deltas,—and finally threading its dubious way between two great uncovered sandy shores, till it meets the Finden Bank, which cuts it into two. This is the general aspect of the scene at low water. But when the tide has fully flowed, and the estuary, no longer an ambiguous river,

has assumed for a few brief hours the ocean's borrowed strength, the great angular basin of the Dingwall Bay is filled to overflowing, the low and marshy deltas entirely disappear, the ground of Dingwall yair is quite submerged, and all vestige of the actual *river* disappears, till the eye traverses again towards the higher portion of the furze bank, where the ordinary vegetation of terra-firma is once more assured.

How far or with what effect the swollen waters of the Conon, during times of flood, may plough their way outrageously through the upper sands, or even spread themselves over the saline waters of the firth, are points which we have had no means or opportunity to ascertain:—but that the river exercises no material influence over the great continuous basins which constitute the splendid Firth of Cromarty, is we think demonstrated by the slightest examination of their natural history. Whoever has dredged in this locality from the great oyster scalps of Balintraad upwards, will find but small modification of the truly marine character of the firth nearly as high as Castle Craig. As he proceeds upwards from Invergordon his dredge will continually bring to light an in-

finite variety of marine animals (as well as vegetables) such as various sponges, star-fish, medusæ, alcyonia, holothuriæ, sea-mice, and various vermes, with that singular zoophyte, *Lobularia digitata*, or the dead man's hand, which we seldom find except after storms even along the open outward coasts of Scotland, although it is well known on the almost *oceanic* shores of Shetland and the Outer Hebrides. He may also kill plenty of codling in Alness Bay, and if his hand is practised in the use of the leister he may strike any still summer morning in eight or ten feet water along shore as many skate as he can set his face to. In regard to all the lower portions of the firth, however much the shallow shores and sandy bays may be here and there left dry by the receding tide, the great central mass of sea-water keeps continuous possession of the vast ravine by night and day,—has doubtless done so for countless centuries, and will assuredly do so for yet as many more. It is in truth this character of depth, and consequently of *abiding quantity*, which distinguishes the great western sea-lochs from the generality of the so-called firths upon the eastern side of Scotland, and assimilates with the former the one in

question. The fresh waters here can form nothing more than a superficial film upon the briny flood, and it is wisely ordered that it should be so, for we feel assured that six hours flowing of the Conon, with any perceptible efficiency through the central channel of the Cromarty Firth, would extinguish life among countless myriads of marine animals, which God, who careth for "all his creatures," has ordained should live, move, and have their being, solely in salt water.

We were well pleased to hear that the people in this quarter had obtained an excellent herring fishing this season, the average being above 300 crans per boat. Good captures had taken place within the bay itself, into which herrings do not always enter. Notwithstanding the tempting beauty of the weather we were obliged to devote ourselves to business in the cabin all day, but we enjoyed a pleasant walk along shore towards the evening hours, proceeding a couple of miles in the direction of Dingwall. We walked as far as a little nameless bridge, and then rested on its parapet, admiring the quiet glittering waters of the firth, and the brightness of the evening sky, which had opened its golden chambers beyond the

vast mountain ranges of Ben Wyvis. The first great basin of the bay lay beneath us, with the blue smoke ascending on the opposite shore from the small town of Invergordon, where the firth is contracted by the meeting of two opposing points, and then expanding again it bathes the wooded shores, and ascends between the narrowing banks as far as Dingwall. We could see in the deep bosom of the farther hills the hollow vale of Strathfeffer, and—looking around us—found amissing two young terriers from the Isle of Skye, which we had taken from the Cutter for the sake of a scamper along those intermingled shores of grass and gravel. We whistled and shouted till the echoes rang with unaccustomed clamour, but all in vain, and we nearly gave them up for lost. But on our homeward way we found they had strayed from the straight path, and scrambled over the brow of a small hill where some children were gathering the seeds of furze. They speedily descried us, and came tumbling towards the highway, with glimmering eyes and red protruding tongues, apparently greatly exhausted by their alpine exercises. But their period of rest was not of long duration. A horseman soon passed

us when they were somewhat in advance, and bravely setting up their bristles at an old woman driving a cow. Neither of them (we mean the dogs) had sense enough to turn either towards the grassy meadow on the one side, or the pebbly shore upon the other, but set off at full gallop exactly in front of horse and rider, who were going at a canter, and all four were speedily out of sight. Our two, however, still driven onwards by the untiring steed and his relentless rider, were ere long interrupted by or rather gladly took refuge in the arms of our boat's crew, who were sitting on the road-side waiting our return to the spot from which we had started about an hour before. They were both panting like panthers, having probably never seen a horse before, and deeming it some dreadful beast pursuing that it might devour. So ended their first excursion on the mainland of Scotland!

While sitting on the Cutter's deck in the evening, our attention was called to a rippling and peculiar sound produced by the play of herrings on the surface of the still waters. It was very distinguishable from all other sounds, and was continued for a considerable time with alternate periods of silence and renewal. But though the

moon was now walking the heavens in serene and almost cloudless majesty, we could perceive no silvery sparkling lustre in the sea, except the splendour of that lunar light. We continued for long on deck, alone amid the solemn stillness, the pure clear sky above, sparkling with countless stars, the calm deep melancholy waters spread around us in one unbroken waveless mirror, the darkly-wooded gorge of the cleft mountains admitting the ingress of the tranquil sea, the grassy shores and gently rising grounds of varied hue, ascending upwards into loftier ranges,—the visible scene, voiceless in its reposing beauty but for the softened sound of some far torrent telling of wild and crag-encompassed stream, fell on our austere spirit even like a consolation in the midst of grief,—

> "With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
> Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
> Into the bosom of the quiet bay."

It seemed as if all the elements of nature had combined to exhibit the perfection of pictorial beauty, and often as we had gazed on many a golden sunset, or felt the influence of the dewy eve, or beheld the moon, an unconsuming fire of

light, rising o'er gorgeous woodland into cloudless ether, the serenity of that encircled sea and sloping sylvan shores, expanded before us like a new creation. We almost feared to move amid the solemn stillness, and remembered, we know not how, a finely constructed though long unthought of sonnet by Hartley Coleridge:

"What was't awaken'd first the untried ear
Of that sole man who was all humankind?
Was it the gladsome welcome of the wind,
Stirring the leaves that never yet were sear?
The four mellifluous streams which flow'd so near,
Their lulling murmurs all in one combined?
The note of bird unnamed? The startled hind
Bursting the brake—in wonder, not in fear,
Of her new lord? Or did the holy ground
Send forth mysterious melody to greet
The gracious pressure of immaculate feet?
Did viewless seraphs rustle all around,
Making sweet music out of air as sweet?
Or his own voice awake him with its sound?"

8th September.—Another heavenly morning of calm enduring brightness. Felt so satisfied with our position on the Cutter's deck, and with the beauty, even under garish sunlight, of the scene around us, that we remained on board all day. But the more active Secretary, after completing

his business in Cromarty, crossed to the North Ferry, and then started in gig to a more distant fishing station called Ballintore. Skirting the Bay of Nigg, and passing over some rich flat country, he soon came again upon the outer eastern coast, and the fishing village just named. He found a number of fine large boats, and seemed to think that the proposed harbour might be useful, though it could not be made a low water one. Mr. Gordon has very extensive premises at Ballintore, for the cure of red-herring, of a first-rate description, but falling rapidly into disrepair. From thence the Secretary proceeded along the coast to the fishing village of Hilton, where some of the Fishery Board's money was laid out in clearing away stones and gravel, which the sea has in a large measure again laid in. The population in these small towns seemed great. Marriages are contracted very early, there is an abundant supply of fish for food, and large families are frequent. In the old church-yard of Hilton, no longer used except for the burial of unbaptised children, stand the remnants of an ancient chapel. There is also the fragment of a fine old Scandinavian stone, with runic knotting, and figures on

horseback riding in the chase, with dogs and deer. On the back of it the ancient carving has been effaced by a more modern chisel, and its place supplied by a coat of arms, and the following inscription, which perhaps contains rather less rhyme than reason :—

"He that lives well dies well, said Solomon the wise,
Here lies Alexander Duff and his three wives."

The Secretary then bent his homeward way by Shandwick, where he found another Scandinavian cross or stone, rising from a small hillock. It is a good deal weather-worn in parts, but still presents a picturesque appearance. The neighbouring soil

was in former times long used as a place of sepulture, and hence the memorial represented above, is called *Clach a Charridh*, or the stone of the burying-ground. He afterwards enjoyed some noble and commanding views of the Cromarty Firth, and met and conversed with various groups of good-looking girls returning from the gilping (*i.e.* herring-gutting), which they had been carrying on at Portmahomack. Soon after his arrival he was joined by the Provost of Cromarty and others, including our usual official friend the fishery officer, to dinner on board the Princess Royal. But we had previously prepared for an early start on the ensuing day.

9th September. We got under weigh this morning at four o'clock, and although the tide took us through the Sutors, we made so slow a progress from the want of wind, that by nine we were only abreast of Ballintore. Our object in thus proceeding out of our course, and northwards, was to visit the fishing station of Rockfield, and a breeze now springing up, we gained it speedily, and landed with a view to examine the pier erected by the Board. The natural approach seemed intricate, as while we neared it in the

boat, by a direct and as we deemed open course, the fishermen on shore waved their hats with a motion to induce us to keep more to the north-eastward. We found the pier of considerable length, but neither wide nor high. It seemed to have been once a good piece of work, yet a great portion of it, which is ridged, as it were, between the rocks at the head, has been dislodged, and about forty yards of the back slope have been destroyed, and made up very carelessly, with stones irregularly put in, instead of being smoothly laid as they were before. Herring curing was going on; and we saw several very fine boats.

Ascending a road which led to the level country above the slope which banks the sea shore, we found a great stretch of cultivation extending inwards,—immense fields of turnips, beans, and potatoes. We walked about a mile along the coast towards the old castle of Balloan, which stands on a piece of projecting bank and rock immediately above the beach. We here met an uncommonly ugly woman, with a red cloak. We proceeded, however, notwithstanding, to the castle, the lower loop-holes of which we found roughly glazed,—some of the apartments, in a very ne-

glected state, being converted into a squalid dwelling for pigs, poultry, and poor people. A fine old tower still remains, with initial letters over the gateway. The principal hall has been rather a good one, its flooring, as well as that of the entrance to the court-yard, being arched and vaulted, and altogether it seems to have been a place of considerable strength and consequence. While the Secretary occupied half an hour in sketching, we gathered some of the finest and largest mushrooms we had ever seen. One of them measured nine and a-half inches across the gills, and weighed sixteen and a half ounces.

Getting on board the Cutter we proceeded in our progress southwards, repassing Hilton, Ballintore, and Shandwick, and crossing the mouth of the Cromarty Firth. Standing over for the coast of Nairn, we could now behold in the far distance the great range of the Cairngorm mountains, with distinct patches of last year's snow still gleaming among their dark recesses. The long recesses of the Moray Firth and Beauly's sheltered bays were screened by the interlacing points of Fort-George and Chanonry. When we again reached the coast, the Secretary, with the

Captain and a boat's crew, went ashore to Nairn on fishery business, and to inspect the harbour. It was found much in the same state as that in which it had been left by the great "Morayshire Floods." The chance of destruction from the river is so great that a plan has been conceived by some to build the new harbour on the shore to the westward of the baths, thus escaping the risk of fresh-water floods, with the additional advantage of avoiding the bar at the river's mouth. It would no doubt be liable to be filled up by sand-drifts wafted into it, and drifted inwards by the tide, but this we believe Mr. Mitchell, engineer to the Board, proposes to obviate by taking advantage of some quarry holes to make a back reservoir of water, with a flood-gate, for scouring out the harbour. The fishermen themselves, however, are all in favour of the old site. It is probable that Nairn is too far up the Moray Firth to afford as convenient a position for a fishery harbour as it might otherwise have done. The baths are excellent, though situate so near the shore as to incur some risk of damage or destruction from a high tide and a heavy sea. The town looked particularly clean, and a considerable num-

ber of new shops and houses having been recently added, presented a very nice appearance.

While in Nairn the Secretary called on James Mitchell (born blind, deaf, and dumb,) whose case many years ago excited so much interest in the minds both of physiological and metaphysical enquirers. He found him stout and healthy, but Miss Mitchell stated that her brother had lost even the glimmer of light which the operation performed by that skilful oculist, Mr. James Wardrope, had for a time afforded. This bereaved individual is very fond of smoking, and when the Secretary placed a lighted cheroot in his hand, he seemed to enjoy it greatly, and shook hands again with the donor, by way of expressing thanks. When afterwards met in the lobby he attracted attention to the fact that he had stuck the stump of the cheroot into the bowl of his pipe, that he might enjoy it to the last. When a cart of coals arrived one day at the door, he seized a shovel, and placing it in the hands of a gentleman, then in the house, laughed immoderately at his own joke, when he found that his friend, to humour him, had proceeded to actual work.*

* Sir T. D. L.'s. *MS. Journal*, p. 143.

When we think of how much of all we know is gained through the medium of the senses of sight and sound, how wonderful is it that the mind of this seemingly forlorn person is not so shrouded in such a depth of moody and monotonous darkness as to be incapable of receiving even the irradiation of a smile! But we doubt not we may say of him, as the great poet has so profoundly and beautifully said of his dim-eyed youthful Highlander:—

> "And yet he neither droop'd nor pined,
> Nor had a melancholy mind;
> For God took pity on the boy,
> And was his friend, and gave him joy,
> Of which we nothing know."

As soon as the Secretary came on board we stood away down the Moray Firth. On nearing Burgh-Head, and then looking backwards to the Sutors of Cromarty, which are visible from a great distance, we could not help being struck with the disagreement in aspect and character of that opening, with the *embouchure* of a Scotch river. This was easily seen by comparison with that of the Findhorn, which was at this time comparatively close at hand, but with its low flat

seaward boundary, formed no feature in the general landscape, and although so much nearer than the Sutors, attracts no attention, and would not in truth be recognised by a stranger. But the idea conveyed by an approach to the Sutors is that of an inland basin of the sea or great salt water loch.

We were glad to hear from such boats as we hailed along this portion of the coast, that here also an excellent herring fishery had been obtained this season,—there having been an average of about two hundred crans per crew. The after part of this day had been dull, with frequent heavy rain; the wind was now extremely light, and long ere night-fall continued envious showers and an accumulation of dense vapour obscured the many well-known much-loved objects which might have otherwise met our view. So we devoted ourselves to the comforts of the cabin for the remainder of the evening.

10*th September*.—There having been but little wind throughout the night, we found ourselves in the morning only off the Banffshire coast, between Spey Bay and the town of Cullen. Though we kept a good way from land we could see the Binn

hill, inwards of that town, and in succession the various stations of Portsoy, Banff, &c. When opposite Cullen we could even perceive the small white temple of Venus in the park towards the sea, and then Findlater castle came speedily to view. To the eastward of Banff lies Gardenstown, and the coast then assumes a grander character, while Troup Head is extremely picturesque, as are still more so the cliffs of the inward bay farther onwards, where we had a view of the House of Troup, a large square mansion, with many windows. Our way was now enlivened by the appearance of a number of coasting vessels, although, from our superior rate of sailing, we continued to run fast away from all those that were proceeding in the same direction. Indeed, our hearts bounded like the waves that bore us, when we thought and felt how the full-filled swelling sails were now sweeping us hourly *homewards*.

Coming within sight of the light-house on Kinnaird's Point, and the adjoining town of Fraserburgh, we had in view upon the nearer shore the large fishing village and harbour of Rosehearty, with three ruined castles at no great distance, viz. Dundargue, Pitsligo, and Pittulie. The first

named is of great antiquity, and was taken and garrisoned by Sir Thomas Beaumont (who accompanied Edward Baliol, when he came to claim the Scottish crown), the son-in-law of the proprietor Cummine, Earl of Buchan, who had no male issue. Near the castle of Pittulie is the village and fishery harbour of the same name,—the latter erected by the Board. The country around seemed gently sloping, and well cultivated, but on the whole bare of trees, probably from the blighting influence of the east winds. There were large fields of green crop, and an apparently heavy harvest, now cutting down. The Secretary went ashore at Pittulie. He found the harbour the finest he had yet seen of those erected by the Fishery Board, though the approach to the entrance is rather intricate. It is a splendid piece of work, being all composed of huge stones, chiefly granite, carefully squared and jointed,—those at the angles dovetailed into each other. The work was done by Mr. Bremner of Wick, and nothing could have been more carefully considered or better executed. There were lying within this harbour sixteen large boats of the finest class, and a roomy sloop was alongside the quay, taking in herring

barrels. We were told that during neap tides the fishing boats could lie afloat where the sloop was stationed. Sir J. S. Forbes, the most influential proprietor in the parish of Pitsligo, has presented the seafaring people with two small lights, one on the pier head, and another on a field in shore,—to be brought into line with one another when taking the entrance to the harbour. We met erelong with the skipper of the sloop, (the James and Christian of Dunbar,) who seemed a sensible experienced man. He observed, in relation to the proposed harbour at Dunbar, that what was called the Blue-Stone passage was the best, for although further out than King Edward's, it would be much stiller than the latter, and that boats and vessels could get from it speedily into deep water, while King Edward's passage, if left open as the entrance, would have a quantity of sand thrown through it to the harbour.* Pittulie itself struck us as a well chosen place for a fishing station, being situate so close upon the open sea. They had had an excellent *take* this year,—averaging about a hundred and fifty crans per boat.

* Sir T. D. L.'s. *MS. Journal*, p. 147.

We now stood towards Kinnaird's Head and Fraserburgh, and had no sooner rounded the point than the sun set in a blaze of glory. Though the day had been obscure, its expiring splendour made amends for all. We scarcely ever beheld a richer or more resplendent picture than what was then presented by that "gorgeous cloudland." As we proceeded southwards, the shadows of night fell over us, but our attention was excited by the brilliant phosphorescence of the surrounding sea, which sparkled with countless fires of living light. The same effect, as observed along our western shores, is well described by Dr. M'Culloch. "If," says he, "the heavens have their stars, so has the ocean. In these summer nights, and on these shores, the sea was one blaze. A stream of fire ran off on each side from the bows, and the ripple of the wake was spangled with the glow-worms of the deep. Every oar dropped diamonds, every fishing-line was a line of light, the iron cable went down like a torrent of flame, and the plunge of the anchor resembled an explosion of lightning. When it blew a gale the appearance was sometimes terrific, and the whole atmosphere was illuminated, as if the moon had been at the

full. In calms nothing could exceed the loveliness of the night, thus enlightened by thousands of lamps, which, as they sailed slowly by, twinkled and were again extinguished at intervals on the glassy and silent surface of the water."* This nocturnal splendour of the sea seems to have excited the admiration of the loftiest minds in the different departments of science and literature, and has formed a theme of wonder alike to Coleridge and Von Humboldt. We kept sight of the Kinnaird Head light long after we had taken up the more fitful blaze of Buchan-Ness. The former is fixed,—the latter flashes every five seconds.

11*th September*.—We experienced a tolerable tossing last night, and found this morning that we had made by long tacking only as far as Newburgh. While nearing Aberdeen we had a fine view of the modern bridge of three or four arches which now spans the Don, and Aberdeen itself seemed much as usual,—the old town with its University and groves of trees, the new with its more straggling houses, and numerous tall smoky sentinels, the chimney-stalks of various manufac-

* *Letters on the Highlands*, vol. iv., p. 15.

tories. Then came the long point of Girdle-Ness, with its lighthouse. Our next larboard tack brought us opposite to Finnan, and as it was just about breakfast time, we thought of its far-famed *haddies* with a sigh. The rocks in this neighbourhood are lofty and picturesque. Stonehaven and the ancient stronghold in its neighbourhood, Dunottar Castle, came next in view, but dimly and very sadly as we thought, perhaps owing to distance and the misty air. The wind now shifting a point and a half in our favour, we were able to run a straight course to the Bell-Rock, anciently called the Inch-Cape, and we thought for a moment of the cruel rashness of Sir Ralph the Rover, and that "unkindest cut of all" which cost his life. "By east the Isle of May," says an old writer, "twelve miles from all land in the German seas, lyes a great hidden rock, called Inchcape, very dangerous for navigators, because it is overflowed everie tide. It is reported in old times, upon the said rock there was a bell, fixed upon a tree or timber, which rang continuallie, being moved by the sea, giving notice to the saylers of the danger. This bell or clocke was put there and maintained by the Abbot of Aberbrothok, and

being taken down by a sea pirate, a year thereafter he perished upon the same rocke, with ship and goodes, in the righteous judgement of God."* Mr. Stevenson has however made amends by stone and lime, in the form of a lofty lighthouse, which shows a revolving light, alternately red and white, every two minutes, and visible at a distance of fourteen nautical miles.

The evening twilight fell around us calmly, followed by a most beautiful starry firmament,—about the brightest we have ever seen without frost. The phosphoric splendour of the sea was also magnificent, the clear and stainless bosom of the deep seeming as it were to repeat the spectacle of the starry vault of heaven.

12*th September*.—By seven this morning we found ourselves well up the Firth of Forth, and passed in succession those various burgh towns which render the Kingdom of Fife illustrious through the world. There was now a stiff breeze blowing, and we lay to for a moment off Burntisland, to consider how to dispose of ourselves to

* STODDART'S *Remarks on Scotland*. See also SOUTHEY'S Ballad on "The Inchcape Rock."—*Poetical Works*, vol. vi., 135.

best advantage for the convenience of all parties. The Secretary recommended running for Granton Pier, which we did accordingly, and soon found ourselves snugly moored alongside, between the Leith and Duke of Richmond steamers.

The remainder of our journey to Edinburgh, and a mile southwards therefrom, being made by land, does not fall within the scope of the present record. If any one reads it from beginning to end, we beg to thank him for the compliment, and recommend his practice as a good example of unbaffled perseverance to the rising generation.

THE END.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY T. CONSTABLE,
PRINTER TO HER MAJESTY.

00086125

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 20 February, 2016